

SERMONS

AND

SKETCHES OF SERMONS.

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SERMONS.

SERMON LII.—*The Yoke and Burden of Christ.*

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light,” Matt. xi, 30.

THE invitation, of which the text is the conclusion, is one of those fine and interesting instances in which the compassion of our Saviour flowed forth toward the unworthy, but still beloved objects of his solicitude. He had been upbraiding the cities wherein most of his mighty works had been done, because they repented not; pronouncing, with deep solemnity, their melancholy but deserved doom of indescribable woe; but, calling to mind the few humble spirits who had believed on him, he praises God on their account: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes:” and then, as still pitying the souls who, under the misguiding direction of the scribes and Pharisees, continued to reject him, he opens his arms to receive them, invites them to come to him, and promises to give them rest.

To understand the words more fully, it is necessary, however, that we observe the phraseology which our Lord here employs. A “yoke,” and a “burden,” were terms used by the Jews to express, in general, religious observances and obligations; and, more especially, those rules and that discipline under which the Jewish rabbis placed their disciples, and the superstitious Pharisees the people at large, in order to their salvation. So our Lord charges them with imposing “heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne.” And St. Peter speaks of “the yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.”

This, then, was the scene which presented itself before our Lord. He saw disciples crowding round the rabbis, submitting to their severe discipline in order to the attainment of spiritual good. He saw the people, performing costly ceremonies, and wearying themselves to get free from the load of guilt and fear which still pressed heavily upon them. Thus seeing, thus pitying them, he invites them, “Come unto me,” and “learn of me;” be my disciples, “for I am meek,” mild,—“and lowly,” condescending. “Take my yoke upon you,” submit to my discipline; “for my yoke,” unlike that which is laid upon you by others,—“for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Brethren, such are the words of our Lord, spoken also to ourselves; words, however, which many wrest to their hurt, and which therefore call for careful interpretation. There is danger here on either hand. Some so regard the easiness of the yoke, as to forget that it is a yoke still; while others spurn its restraints, and flee from it as from a galling bondage. My business shall be to show you that the truth lies between these extreme views; that Christian liberty is not license; that Christian restraint is not bondage; in a word, that in truth and reality

Christ has his yoke and burden, but that his "yoke is easy, and his burden light."

I. Christ has his yoke. There are the conditions, the restraints, and the services of his religion.

1. There are the conditions which his religion prescribes.

The Jewish doctors had their conditions of discipleship; and if we will be the disciples of Christ, we, too, must hear of conditions. There must be unqualified submission to him as our teacher. We must sit at his feet, renouncing all but him, the teacher sent from God. From his decisions we are to make no appeal; all is to be determined by, "Thus saith the Lord." And this applies both to our opinions, and rules of practice. There must be exclusive trust in the merits of his death, as the sacrifice for sin. When the Gospel was first preached, the Jew had to turn from all the sacrifices of the law; the Gentile, from all his offerings to his gods. And so must we turn from all supposed merit or worthiness of our own. There must be a resting in the sole merit of Christ. That alone must be pleaded before God, and all things hoped for only from that. And there must be self denial; for so himself has said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." To affliction and suffering, as in his wisdom he may appoint, we are to submit, "enduring hardness as good soldiers of Christ."

2. In the discipline of Christ, there are likewise restraints.

Some of them refer to our tempers. We are to be meek, forgiving, merciful, and kind. Others, to our words. His disciples have a language of their own. No "corrupt communication" may "proceed out of their mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying." "Anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, are to be put away from them," and "filthiness, and foolish talking, and jesting, which are not convenient." Some, again, relate to our conduct. Instead of doing that which is right in our own eyes, instead of being "men pleasers," we have to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." And some, to our society. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; but come out from among them, and be separate."

3. There are the services which the religion of Christ requires from us.

The services of devotion, of zeal, and of charity. Jesus uttered "a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." An apostle, on the Lord's authority, has taught us that it is good, and becoming the Christian character and profession, to be always "zealously affected in a good thing." At the same time, even property is to be devoted to God; for Christians are to devise liberal things, and to "do good to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith."

Such is the yoke of Christ. To many it appears hard and burdensome. I have to show you that it is not so.

II. Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

I must endeavour to convince you of this, as the first step to induce you to take it upon yourselves, that so you may find the promised "rest to your souls."

1. And my first observation is, that whether Christ's yoke be easy or not, you find no rest by rejecting it.

You are still weary and heavy laden. It is necessary for you to know this, to prepare you to listen attentively to the arguments by which your Lord's yoke will be proved to be easy.

Suppose you reject him as your teacher, it is still plain that you find no rest. In proportion as you inquire, you are bewildered in uncertainty and doubt. Ignorance or skepticism is your only alternative. Suppose you reject him as the sacrifice for your sins, you find no rest. The load of guilt still remains, and the more serious you are, in looking at God's law, and comparing your own life with its requisitions, the more heavily does that load press on you. Your conscience is heavy laden, and you labour even to weariness, but find no relief. Suppose you refuse to deny yourself and take up your cross, you are still weary and heavy laden. You put on the yoke of your appetites and passions. Sense gains the ascendancy over you. Violent affections or evil tempers hurry you away. Nor can you avoid crosses. Afflictions will come; and under their load you become peevish, and sullen, and increasingly rebellious, and find that it is hard for you to kick against the pricks. You will endure no restraints on your society; but with what a burden do you come from the company of the wicked and vain. You will have no restraint on your words and conduct; but you find that license is sin, and that sin is ever attended by guilt. Or do you reject Christ's service? But does the absence of a praying spirit give you peace? or of useful living afford you rest? Yes; the rest of the slothful servant, always in alarm lest his Lord should come and reckon with him. Write it on your hearts, that whatsoever Christ's yoke may be, you will find no rest by rejecting it.

2. To prove that Christ's yoke or discipline is easy, I observe, that it conforms in all its parts to the truth and reality of things.

That is, it is a reasonable service; and nothing is easy which does not commend itself to an enlightened and sound judgment. For a time, indeed, we may fancy ourselves satisfied without this, but not upon the whole of the case. Now try the discipline of Christ by this rule. Submission to him as teacher is required, because he is the infallible wisdom of God. There must be exclusive dependence on the merits of his sacrifice, because those merits are infinite. Shall we dare to put any thing in the place of the atoning blood Divine? We are to be restrained and ruled by him; and this is most fitting. God is the maker and governor of all things, and the harmony and happiness of the universe can only be permanent by the continuance of all its parts in the places where his wisdom fixes them, acting as his supreme will appoints. What, if the rivers forsook their channels, and the sea swelled over its appointed bounds, and the stars wandered from their place? Confusion and ruin must ensue. And there is a law for man. Sin is disorder and misery. Sin sets man against man, against himself, against God. What is Christ's obeyed discipline, but restored harmony; the dominion of the wise and gracious will of God? That yoke, surely, must be easy; that burden light.

3. The yoke, or discipline, of Christ must necessarily be easy, because it brings with it the sense of the approbation of God.

And this is the highest bliss of the creature. Not even angels could be perfectly happy without it. They have the tokens of Divine acceptance vouchsafed to them; and at the day of judgment, the saints

shall have the delightful "Well done!" pronounced by their Lord.—Nor are the saints on earth without these cheering tokens. They labour that whether present in the body, or absent from it, they "may be accepted of him." Nor is their labour vain. He makes them glad with the light of his countenance. And for man to know that he is accepted of God, what can heighten this? Well may any spirit be weary and heavy laden without it. Now, it is to this that the discipline of Christ conducts us. The Jewish ceremonies, by themselves, could not effect this. The repetition of the sacrifices was a continual remembrance of sin, and they who rested in these could never be "made perfect." There still remained the "conscience of sins." And as to them who took on them the yoke of the masters, of the scribes and Pharisees, "in vain did they worship God, receiving for doctrines the commandments of men." And therefore did our Lord pity them, burdened as they were with the ceremonies of religion, but uncheered by its consolations. And look at the heathen, or the formalist, or lukewarm professor of our own day. There is no token of accepted worship. There may be an outward approach to God; but as that is all, it is met by no answering smile, no inward assurance, "I am thy God." They call, after their manner, "from morning, even until noon, and to the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice;" but there is "neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regard" them. But the discipline of Christ is, as we have seen, the will of God concerning us in all things; and if Christ himself be accepted by us, if sin be renounced, if self be trampled upon, if in simplicity we only aim at pleasing him, and are willing to suffer any thing rather than offend him, he will not see this without giving to us "a token for good," which shall cheer us in his service, and make its most difficult parts easy. God has access to the souls which he has made; and by shedding abroad in our heart his abounding consolations, as well as by gracious answers to our prayers, and interpositions of protecting power, and guiding wisdom, he will prove to us that we are accepted of him. If God be with us in his manifested presence and love, then will the yoke be easy, and the burden light.

4. The yoke of Christ is easy; for he who heartily submits to it receives a state of mind corresponding to it.

One of the grand peculiarities of Christianity is, that it provides for the soul's regeneration. Here, all the philosophy of the world has always been deficient. It could prescribe courses of virtue, though these were very defective; but it could not give the heart to observe them. It had no laver of regeneration; it referred to no Holy Spirit. And very similar is much of modern religion. It assumes, indeed, something of the form of Christianity, and even prescribes many of the laws of Christ. But that is all. It knows nothing of regeneration by the Holy Ghost. It refuses to acknowledge the saying of our Lord, in its full import, "Ye must be born again." What wonder, then, that the service of God appears hard, his Sabbaths a weariness, and duty itself is regarded but as painful drudgery? What wonder that religion should become a thing of times and seasons for church or chapel; and that the unwilling bow, thus forcibly bent, should fly back so soon as the time of worship is past, and the place changed; and that the soul, with all its affections, should now be devoted to the

world? But when Christ is heard, and truly followed, an inward change takes place, and a principle is planted within us which corresponds with every part of the discipline we are required to observe. Is he our teacher? There is now the humility which delights to "sit at his feet, and hear his words." Is he the sacrifice for our sins? There is the consciousness of unworthiness, which rejoices to take refuge in his perfect merits. Does he call us to deny ourselves? There is the sacred fear of offending, which makes pleasure, honour, interest, light as air in comparison of the necessity of avoiding sin. Are we to take up our cross? There is the patience, which, submitting to the will of God, meekly acquiesces in the appointed trial. There is faith, which waits with confidence for darkness to be turned into light, and rests on the sure promise of God. There is holiness, which not only shrinks from all evil, but aspires after perfect purity. And there is love, active to do, and strong to suffer; before which high feeling every valley is exalted, and every mountain brought low. Such are the principles which Christ implants. Neglect them, and we promise you no ease in the yoke. Suffer him to save as well as rule you, and you shall find that his yoke is easy, and his burden light.

5. The intimate and inseparable connection between every branch of the discipline of Christ, and the heavenly state, crowns the whole.

It is, in fact, a discipline and training for heaven, not merely the only, but the sure and infallible way thither. Why are you to sit at his feet and learn his words now, but that, being turned from earthly light to the light of the word, you may be prepared to find him your wisdom in eternity? He has many things to say to us, but we cannot bear them now: but he will fulfil his promise; and what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. We are to flee to his sacrifice; and only thus can we overcome death, and enter heaven itself, "by the blood of the Lamb." Why are we to deny ourselves, but that the soul may rise above sense, and gain the perfect relish for the spiritualities of heaven? Why are we to bear the cross, but that our light affliction may work for us the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? "We suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." We are to leave the society of the world, because we are so soon to join "the innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and Church of the first born." We cultivate holiness, and that both in thought, word, and deed, because there entereth into heaven nothing that is defiled, and that so we may be presented without spot before God. Why do we serve him in acts of worship here, but because the high festivals, the holy Sabbaths of heaven, are at hand, and we have to begin here the songs that shall never end? And why are we to abound in zeal to save others, but that the number of the citizens of heaven may be swelled, and that we, turning many to righteousness, may shine as the stars for ever and ever? By the discipline of Christ we become "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," and thus experience how delightful is his yoke.

Hear, then, his invitation, and come unto him. Recollect who it is that speaks, and that he is "meek and lowly in heart." Are his words, "Come unto me?" Let us say, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." Is his injunction, "Take my yoke upon you?" O let us take it now; let us take it fully; let us take it for ever! And what is his promise?

Rest, "rest unto your souls." See what you want; and what you can only find in him. Come to him; ever carry his yoke: you shall have rest now; rest in death; rest for ever and ever. His counsel shall stand. His word can never fail.

SERMON LIII.—*The Path of the Just.*

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," Proverbs iv, 18.

THE just man here mentioned is not the man who begins merely, but who likewise perseveres; not he who only enters the gate, but who continues in the path. Nothing can be more affecting than to see so solemn a matter as religion taken up on light grounds, and as lightly abandoned, as though it were a question of no moment, whether we served God, or served him not. Nor does any thing incur a greater guilt, or expose to a greater danger. "Better had it been for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Seven devils entered, where only one had been before; and the last state was worse than the first. But here you have the man of steadfastness and perseverance. His path is no meteor, which gleams and expires; no rising day, lowering into mist and darkness: it is the path of the cloudless light of heaven. It shineth yet more and more. Such is his continual progress in truth, holiness, and happiness.

This is at once the character and the reward of persevering piety; and in this point of view we now direct you to consider the text.

Persevering and steadfast piety is as the light that shineth more and more,

I. Because of the increasing demonstration which it furnishes of the truth and excellency of religion.

There are many proofs of that truth and excellency. Some are argumentative; others experimental. These last have always an increasing power. We find how well adapted religion is to every case. We have the safe guidance of its principles in every difficulty; the support of its consolations in every trial. All go to deepen conviction, till, saved from the shadow of every doubt, we walk in perfect light.

II. Persevering piety possesses an increasing assurance of the Divine favour.

This is the very light of the soul, the only source of peace in the conscience. At first it is obtained by faith; but in the case we are supposing, faith grows into a habit, and keeps the soul in perfect peace. Faith itself is strengthened by new discoveries of the love of God, and of the fitness and fulness of the atonement and intercession of the Saviour; and thus does the peace of the soul strengthen, filial intercourse with God becomes more rich and frequent, till we come to "rejoice in the Lord alway."

III. Persevering piety has increasing pleasures.

What I have just been stating furnishes the abiding foundation for this. There can be no growing happiness without a preserved sense of Divine acceptance. But with this, there is more. Piety opens its sources of mental pleasure; pure, because not supplied by sinful objects; rich and constant, because flowing from sources of real good; and out of the reach of outward things, because issuing from springs which these cannot dry up. And all these, deriving, as they do, their life from Divine influence, have in them a principle of increase. Every thing evil is uneasy, and connected with misery; but very different is the case with true good. Is it not a refreshing feeling, that I am at peace with the whole world? that I am benevolently affected toward all, and to every good thing? that I am conscious of purity of intention? and that, by the grace of God, I am kept from sinning against him? that my choice is decided, and that my will coincides with the will of God? Such feelings as these bring pleasure and satisfaction with them; and it is in their very nature to increase; and thus do they fill the soul with deeper and richer delight.

Then, what increasing pleasures are opened by the word and ordinances of God! by Christian communion, and religious exertions! All these, to a spirit prepared for them by the salvation which is by grace, through faith, present pleasures which never cloy, which afford richer, and still richer, satisfaction.

IV. Persevering piety has the advantage of an increasing evidence of the wisdom and care of God in his providential arrangements.

It is a great thought, that man is guided by God; that there is a special providence over him; that every thing is directed to an end in which he is interested. And this is the state of every true Christian, apprehended alone by faith. This faith, indeed, has its trials, as lighter or darker clouds flit across the sky. But this is the high privilege of him who perseveres in piety, that, as he is more wise to see, and more careful to mark, the abounding instances of Divine interposition, he has the very demonstration, ever growing in strength and clearness, because of the continual accessions of evidence, that "the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him and hope in his mercy." He argues, as to the present, from a larger, longer experience of the past, and walks steadfastly through paths of danger, seeing God, and rejoicing in his guide.

V. Persevering piety has brighter and more cheering views of the eternal state.

This, indeed, is the benevolent intention of God as to all; and conviction of the world's vanity, experience of the world's trials, are designed to quicken the progress of the affections toward man's heavenly home. Why are we in trouble? why weep over losses, disappointments, and deaths, but for this? Persevering piety prepares the spirit to receive the lesson the chastening was designed to teach. Crucifixion to the world increases, and with it stronger desires for a yet richer preparation for heaven. Every thing in piety moves toward God; but it is God in heaven, as fully revealed there. There is access to him on earth, but not such as is enjoyed in heaven; and the privileges given on earth excite growing desires for the higher privileges of heaven. Stronger desires produce a more rapid progress, and thus

brighter views ; as the traveller first sees the distant towers, which, as he approaches them, appear to enlarge, till he beholds them in all their grandeur.

In conclusion,

1. See that your path be indeed the path of the just ; the path entered upon by a penitent faith. Walk in it by the strength of regenerate habits, fed by prayer, and by communion with God. See that you never expect the desired end without this steady perseverance.

2. Remember that the way of the wicked is darkness ; that it is all error and perplexity : they know not at what they stumble. Dark already, the clouds continue to thicken, the gloom to increase, till there comes the black, settled darkness of eternal night.

3. Recollect, for your encouragement, that, bright and cheering as is the light upon your path, it is but the light of the morning. It shall issue in full day ; but that shall be the eternal day of heaven. That shall be the perfect day of revelation,—of deliverance,—of eternally established holiness,—of full joy,—of the glorious vision of God himself.

Be steadfast and unmovable. Forget the things that are behind, reach forth to them which are before, and so press toward the mark. Increasing diligence shall bring increasing pleasure. The light continues to brighten and spread as you advance, and ere long that perfect day shall come, whose sun shall go no more down, and God himself be your everlasting brightness.

SERMON LIV.—*The Strait Gate.*

“Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us ; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are,” Luke xiii, 23–25.

WHILE Christ was on earth he was not what might be termed a most successful preacher. Afterward, however, his work appeared to his servants. Hence, in the preceding verses, he compares the kingdom of God to the leaven for a time hid in three measures of meal ; and to the mustard seed, cast into the earth. Thus did he go “through the cities and villages, teaching ;” sowing the seed which was to become a great tree, imparting the leaven which was to leaven the whole lump. While thus employed, one came and said to him, “Lord, are there few that be saved?”—a serious, but probably a curious, question too. Perhaps it was not, in itself, an improper question ; for our Lord gives an immediate, though indirect, reply to it ; taking occasion to give the advice which Luke has recorded in the text ; and words more solemn, more deeply impressive, never fell even from the lips of the Saviour himself.

Let us observe,

I. The folly of making religious inquiries, except in order to holy and practical results.

I do not depreciate the value of religious information. There is a curiosity in reference to it, which to a certain extent is laudable.—Moses said, “I beseech thee show me thy glory.” Approach to distinct vision is an approach toward the perfection of the future state. But the text does not suggest the notion of such as, taking care to secure right principles in order to right practice, humbly look into the mysteries of religion. It rather reminds us of such as cherish a speculative habit, and chiefly employ themselves in discussing doctrines, wrestling with difficulties, and pursuing various inquiries, as though the whole system of truth must be explained to them, before they could have any interest in it. To such persons the text is most instructive. “Are there few that be saved?” inquired the man. Strive thyself to be of the number, was the reply he received. So, on another occasion, when it was said to him, “And what shall this man do?” the reply was, “What is that to thee? follow thou me.” What is it to me, whether few or many be saved, if I am not saved myself? What avails it that we know the mystery of the trinity, if we neither love nor serve God? What does my knowledge of the origin of evil signify, if I am not found striving against sin? what, that I understand the mysteries of Divine Providence, unless I am humbled by its judgments, or moved to grateful love by its mercies? what, if I know why the heathen have been so long overlooked, if I am not improving the superior advantages which I myself possess? But,

II. The answer of our Lord implies that, in his time, at least, the number of the saved was but small.

Few strove to enter in at the strait gate; and therefore were so many found walking in the broad way leading to death. This does not, however, conclude upon the question, whether few or many will be saved at the last. Perhaps the “multitude which no man can number” will include a large majority of the human race; especially taking infants into the account. Nor does it weaken the hope than an age will arrive when the many shall be saved. But at the time when our Lord spoke, and, alas! at the present time, is this description awfully applicable. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it.” And what is the reason of this? Have only a few been redeemed? Nay, but “he gave himself a ransom for all.” Are but a few called? Nay, the declaration is, “Many are called.” “Wisdom crieth aloud; she uttereth her voice in the streets.” The reason is found where our Lord himself places it: “Ye will not come unto me.” Many will not even listen to the truth. Of those who hear, many will not lay it to heart. Many think without resolving; many resolve without executing; many begin to execute, who do not endure to the end. Awfully serious is the thought, that, of the multitudes we see around us, there are but few that be saved.

III. If we would be of the number of the saved, we must “strive to enter in.”

It is of the greatest importance that we mark the force of the word which our Lord employs. Our own word “agonize” is derived from it. It is used of the candidates for victory in the ancient games; of those who had to run, to fight, to wrestle; all implying vigorous and

persevering exertion. In our own case, the exhortation implies great opposition and difficulty. We may not deceive you. Salvation is, comparatively, a work of difficulty. Many underrate this; we should therefore endeavour to be fully aware of it.

There is our own heart. This is naturally corrupt, possessing no one principle friendly to good. All good is to be brought into it, and is opposed by it. Therefore have we to strive.

There is the influence of outward things. We are prone to walk by sight. There is a constant bearing on our affections from without; from our trials, and even our blessings. We are opposed by a strong current, setting directly against us, which can only be overcome by being breasted. We must strive. And the force of this current is increased by the added stream of example. There are not only the worldly who call us to accompany them, but lukewarm, slothful professors. How necessary that we strive!

There is the devil, a murderer of souls from the beginning, always tracking our path; seasons of powerful temptation. We cannot conquer unless we strive.

There are the sacrifices which must be made. Our interest, when duty requires it, must be given up. The cross must be taken up and borne. The flesh must be denied. The offending right hand is to be cut off. Against this self-denying life nature will stir up all her opposition. To overcome it, we must strive.

Such is the picture of our difficulties. There is the gate of safety before us; but a crowd stands there to keep us from entering: the wicked who remain with us; apostates who bring a bad report of the way; numerous pleasures which would hold us in silken bands; our own giant corruptions seizing us with strong arm; and all marshalled under their great leader, the god of this world. Prepare to strive, or give up the hope of entering. Gird on your armour; fight, wrestle, pray, or you are eternally undone. And forget not, that, having entered, there still remain enemies to be overcome, difficulties to be surmounted. To the very end we must strive. But observe,

IV. We have but a limited and uncertain time in which we may strive.

Some parts of the following verses refer to the Jews; but their principle is as applicable to ourselves. The door which is open will by and by be closed; and then we may seek to enter in, but shall not be able. In the views afforded us by these latter verses, we have,

1. The master of the house waiting to receive his guests to the feast of heavenly joy. In the meanwhile, his servants spread his invitations, and say, "Come, for all things are now ready."

2. The expiration of the limited time. He rises up, and shuts to the door. This happens, as to each of us, at the hour of death. The day of judgment shall solemnly proclaim that the season for striving is past.

3. The amazing change in the opinions of men. Now, few seek to enter in, as setting no value on spiritual and heavenly good. Then, that will be seen to be all. Many will seek, but in vain. Our opinions shall certainly undergo a change; either before it is too late, or, at farthest, then.

4. The pleas used. The light of eternity not only presents things

under an aspect in which we had before refused to consider them, but recalls the past to memory. We view some slight connection with Christ and his cause, and endeavour to urge it in our own favour.—“We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.” But all in vain: he shall declare that he never knew us, and we shall be compelled to depart.

5. And what an aggravation of our punishment, to see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God,—to see the comers from east, west, north, and south,—and we ourselves thrust out! We see the reality of the joys we despised; the success of those whom we ridiculed, and whose example we spurned. There they are in God's everlasting kingdom, partakers of the endless festivities of heaven.—And we, once invited, thrust out. We would not enter in, and we shall not. Strive, then, without delay, without intermission, and to the end.

SERMON LV.—*The Mountain of the Lord's House.*

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more,” Isaiah ii, 2-4.

PROPHECY is among the most impressive of the peculiarities of the sacred volume. No one can rationally doubt but that the all-pervading eye of God pervades the future; no one, that the all-searching Spirit can impress, as it were, a portion of that future, as thus seen and known, upon the human mind.

The evidence in proof of prophecy, however, ought to be strong and decisive; and such is that of the predictions of our Scriptures. The very presumptive evidence is of the highest class. They were uttered by holy men; and with such only could the Holy Ghost have intimate intercourse. They are all holy in their moral influence. In the scenes which they open before us, we see the clouds and darkness which are before the throne of God in part removed, and more clearly is it manifested that justice and judgment are the habitation of it. Though the Jews are often made the subjects of these prophetic declarations, yet we see no political end proposed, no national prejudices flattered. And then, they have an explicitness which forms a striking contrast to the oracles of pagan antiquity. I know they are often enigmatic, but they are never equivocal. They may be applied in a higher or lower sense; and sometimes to several events, but never to contrary ones. Nor are all even enigmatic; some of the most eminent are very clear. But, even when most obscure, their darkness is the mere privation of light, not the positive darkness, like that of Egypt, in which imposture

shrouds itself. It is the obscurity of some allegorical sculpture, in which the figures are true to nature and fact, though we want the key of the story; not that of hieroglyphics, things of arbitrary device, which hide by cunning what is interestedly intended to be concealed.

The grand evidence of the truth of prophecy, however, is fulfilment. Those predictions of Scripture which have already been accomplished are too numerous and well known to be at present quoted; and thus do we rest satisfied, that in due time those which are as yet unfulfilled shall receive their complete accomplishment.

The text is one of these, and calls our attention,

I. To a period of time when the events of which it speaks are to occur. "It shall come to pass in the last days."

II. To the state of the general Church of God in that period. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains."

III. To certain special operations of God, by which the efforts of this restored Church, to bless and save the world, shall be rendered effectual. "He shall judge among the nations."

I. The period of time mentioned here, and in various other parts of the Old Testament, is, with peculiar emphasis, styled, "the last days."

The phrase means, generally, the age of the Messiah; and is thus understood by both Jewish and Christian commentators. The apostle has put this meaning beyond all doubt. "God, who spake in times past unto the fathers, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

1. The expression intimates, that the dispensations in which the prophets of the Old Testament lived, were but preparatory to one of complete perfection.

To the future all these ancient holy men were ever looking. The patriarchal was succeeded by the Mosaic age. Prophet came after prophet; but all were looking forward: not one of them was himself the great object of prophetic gaze. The last days had not arrived.—All things around them, and before them, were typical and shadowy. They were glorious, it is true; but their glories were like the radiant clouds of early dawn, owing their lustre to a vast orb of light, which was climbing the horizon, but had not yet appeared. For the full burst of that splendour they were intently gazing; and when, in the visions of the future, they saw him rise, they saw then that "the last days" were come, that they had nothing beyond to expect; and, in all the fulness of a holy satisfaction, they contemplated the scene, knowing that God himself had no higher gift to bestow, and that the world could desire no richer blessing.

2. The emphasis with which the prophets speak of "the last days," intimates, also, the views they had of the complete efficiency of that religious system which the Messiah was to introduce.

On that age all their hopes of the recovery of a world they saw sinking around them rested; and in the contemplation of this efficient plan of redeeming love, they mitigated their sorrows. Sorrow they did. God only could number the tears which, in former ages, must have been shed over the declension of true religion. It could not be otherwise. For ages the threatening clouds had hung over the heathen world. One burst of smoke after another issued from the bottomless

pit, darkening the nations, and spreading even to the horizon of Zion. War was maintained, but not always successfully. Errors were ever springing up. O how many have said, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men!" "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law!" But the moment they directed their gaze to the last days, the weeping eye brightened. They felt that the world needed a more efficient system and they saw it descend with Messiah from heaven. The man possessed with a devil was brought to the disciples, but they could not cast him out. A world over which Satan had usurped dominion found no effectual relief from patriarchs and prophets. But the men of God were permitted to see the last days, the day of Christ, though afar off. They saw that demoniac world brought to Jesus, and legions of devils expelled. Hence they triumphed in anticipation. The moment they saw Messiah enter the field, their anguish gave way, they knew how the combat would end, and, like their Saviour afterward, they rejoiced in spirit when they beheld Satan like lightning fall from heaven.

3. The days of the Messiah were regarded by the ancient Church as "the last days," because in them all the great purposes of God were to be developed and completed.

On this subject we cannot long dwell, though one of the noblest to which our attention can turn. It is certain, however, that the plans of God are great and general ones, not expedients to meet existing circumstances. They must, therefore, be connected with results so vast, as finally to justify the great agencies he has employed, and the apparent delays of his coming. Perplexities and difficulties have, indeed, occurred. They arise from the vast compass of the design itself. That sweeps beyond the bounds of human sight; yes, and of angel ken also. Angels are looking into the mysteries of redemption, and contemplating the progress of the Divine plans with an interest as intense as our own. To them is continually made "known the manifold wisdom of God." But the intricacies of the drama shall be unfolded, and the catastrophe bring into full view the perfections of God; and those over which the slightest veil has been cast shall shine forth in their own splendour. Wisdom, and justice, and mercy, will then appear in unstained sanctity and glory; and the end will make its appeal to every principle of right feeling in the bosom of every intelligence, and be gazed upon for ever with awful delight, and rich, but trembling, satisfaction. Though the day of the world's duration has been overcast, and fearful storms have raged through many of its hours, yet "at eventide it shall be light." Then shall the kingdom of Christ be universal, and the lines of Providence, so numerous and perplexed, shall meet and concentrate in the glories of the latter days. Then shall the dead rise, and publicly all enemies be put under Messiah's feet. Then vice shall meet its just punishment, and persevering righteousness its high reward. "Then cometh the end." The world, the scene of all these contests, shall be swept away, but it shall not be forgotten. No, brethren; every age, every scene of it shall be remembered, as illustrations, felicitous or fearful, of the mercy or justice of God, in the everlasting joys or woes of the saved or the lost of the immortal race of man.

II. The text calls us to consider the state of the general Church of God in the last days. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."

Some have considered this as a prediction of the actual rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of the political and Church state of the Jews, in the close of the latter days of the times of the Messiah. I shall not discuss the difficult question of the literal interpretation of such prophecies as these. Nor would such an interpretation, even if allowed, at all interfere with that in which all agree, and on which I shall dwell, that, whatever else the prediction may signify, it sets forth, under figures taken from the Levitical institutions, the future state of the general Church of Christ, which, though in too many places corrupt, is not forgotten by its Head. For the principle which leads to such an interpretation, we have no less authority than that of the Apostle Paul, who uniformly considers the temple, its priests, and its ritual, as types of heavenly things; and in one well-known passage makes use of them to characterize the true Church of Christ. "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." In this text the Church of Christ bears the name of Sion; angels are its ministers, as of old; here is the general assembly of the true Israel; here God is Judge or King of all; here is the High Priest in the person of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; here, the blood which "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Behold, then, the key to the text. The mountain of the Lord's house is no longer covered with ruins, but established in the top of the hills. It is the place, as of old, of glad and holy resort; and the enlightening law goes forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. In other words, we have the Jewish Church, in her ancient splendour, set before us; the towers of her holy house glittering above the tops of the mountains, and all her services in perfection and order: and all this, as the symbol of the general Church of Christ in the close of the last days; a view already realized in some small degree, but which presents its fulness to our hope. We learn from it,

1. That the Church shall be restored to evangelical order and beauty: it shall be as Mount Zion.

Zion was the place of sacrifices; the place where God for ages showed the great principle that without shedding of blood there was no remission of sin. And in the last days the true sacrifice shall be exhibited here. There shall be no denial of the Lord that bought us; no display of human merit; all the rites of the Church, and all her members, shall cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

Mount Zion was the throne of majesty. And in coming to the evangelical Zion we come to God as the universal Sovereign and Judge. In the latter days, Gospel law will shine there as brightly as Gospel grace. The Antinomian error, whose faith makes void the law, shall be swept away equally with the reasoning pride which tramples under foot the blood of the covenant, and the pharisaic self sufficiency which leaves it unapplied.

Zion was the mountain of holiness. And in these glorious days holy shall all they be who name the name of Christ. Godly discipline shall

be restored, and the yoke of Christ be borne and loved. Then shall the Church present, in a higher sense than ever, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people."

Zion was the special residence of God. He has said, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell." When the temple was solemnly dedicated to him by Solomon, he condescended to come down and take possession of it; and on the day of pentecost he took possession of the Church. Never, indeed, has he altogether departed from it; but in the latter days, there shall be special manifestations of his presence in richer displays of vital power, filling every service with energy, and causing all his people to walk in the light of his countenance.

To this state we are ever to labour to bring the Church; avoiding, ourselves, all that is inconsistent with truth in doctrine and holiness in life. For the richer effusions of grace on ourselves, and on all who name Christ's name, we are earnestly to pray, that "the Spirit being poured out from on high, the barren wilderness may become a fruitful field."

2. We learn that the Church, in this state, shall be distinguished by its zeal. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

So it was in the best estate of the Jewish Church. The law went forth from Zion. Greater effects, doubtless, were produced by this than we can now tell. We know not how far this sacred light extended, nor how much it checked error and idolatry. Truth is mighty; and though we know it was opposed, yet did it in many instances prevail, and, at any rate, prevented the clouds of falsehood from closing over Judea, and thus wrapping the entire world in night.

Still mightier, however, shall be the power, still greater the effect, when the Church is brought into the state we are now contemplating. See, in illustration of this, how she is at present situated. Look at the position she occupies in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America. Suppose every part of the nominal Church to be thus restored, and the Divine word rushing forth as on the wings of the wind, how speedily would every land be visited, every soul enlightened!

But beside this interesting view, this part of the text is fruitful both in instruction and admonition. We have the picture of "many people, saying, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." How delightful the scene on which we thus gaze! But how is it brought about? Mark the connecting particle. They shall thus say, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." This is our work. The Gospel is to be preached in all nations; and till you send forth the law, they will not say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord." On your exertions, under God, this is made to depend.

We thus see the connection between the best state of the Church, and this holy zeal. All history proves this. Whenever the Jewish Church contented herself with the name of living, but was indeed dead, then were the Gentiles overlooked or hated; but in better times she prayed, "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." So was it in the first age of the Church. Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, the

Churches were multiplied. And so it is now. True zeal is the fruit of genuine and fervent piety. Where piety is not, there is no godly zeal; and where there is no zeal there is no piety. A religious society destitute of zeal can be no part of the Church established in the top of the mountains. No glory is brought by it to the Lord of the Church; his dominions are not enlarged; wanderers are not reclaimed. When a Church is right with God, then does it exemplify this part of the text: "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Carefully cultivate your own piety, and we may then look for all the rest.

III. We call your attention to certain special operations of God, by which the efforts of his restored Church to bless and save the world shall be rendered effectual.

Without God, let us never forget, not all the efforts of the Church, even in her best state, can be effectual. The triumphant spread of truth, and the conversion of men, are eminently the work of God; a work which, when wrought, shall make the hand of God clearly visible. This operation is strikingly expressed in the text.

1. He shall judge among the nations.

The word "judge" is not always used in its purely judicial sense, but in that of government,—the exercise of regal power both in mercy and judgment; and in this sense we here take it. He shall so order the affairs of the world, that opportunities shall be afforded to his Church to exert herself for its benefit. And thus is he judging among the nations in our own day. Where is the place to which he is not giving his Church access? Christian Churches exist in America, and can reach all its pagan tribes. Christian and Protestant colonies spot the continent of Africa, and every where the door is opening to new regions. The Greek Church holds a commanding position in the midst of Mohammedanism, and extends her dominion over the vast wilds of Tartary. A British empire is established in India, and is pouring a flood of light upon that land of darkness. The voyages of Cook opened the way to the islands of the Pacific Ocean; and the late hazardous enterprizes, the voyages to the secluded ice-bound regions of the north, will bring every scattered tribe of Arctic residents to our knowledge, that so, not a wandering sheep in the whole world may be unvisited, or uninvited into the Shepherd's fold.

2. It is a part of the regal office to show mercy; and thus, too, shall he "judge among the nations."

This he shall do by taking off those judicial desertions which, as a punishment for unfaithfulness, he has inflicted. This is an awful and mysterious subject. Yet is it fact that "in times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." "The times of this ignorance God winked at;" did not regard them by way of interposition. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God," and therefore were they "given up." But, in the exercise of his great prerogative, he shall visit them once again. He shall give the word, and great shall be the company of the preachers. His servants shall go forth, entering at every open door, and publishing truth and peace. And when the voice of many people is heard, saying, "Let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob," the Churches shall glorify God, and say, "Then hath he" again "granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life."

"He shall judge among the nations." He shall do this judicially, yet not for destruction, but correction. There are two sorts of judgments; judgments of wrath, and judgments of mercy. The prophet seems elsewhere to allude to both. "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see." Such is the case in judgments without special grace. Such are many of those calamities which have already shaken the earth; and yet, no moral ends seem to have been accomplished by them, except so far as others view them as examples and warnings. "But they shall see." When grace is given with judgments, then do they become corrective and salutary; and when such "judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

3. It is, therefore, added, "And shall rebuke many people;" or, according to Lowth's translation, "work conviction among them."

And may we not hope that this is approaching? For mark the time when he shall thus judge; even when the law goes forth out of Zion, and his word from Jerusalem. And thus is the word gone forth. The connection of judgment with its intention that word clearly discovers. God thus works conviction of the evil of sin, of the folly of idolatry, the guilt of infidelity; a full, universal conviction that nothing but submission to God, and faith in Christ, can make the world happy. And when the law shall thus be sent forth universally, when the Church shall have sent her messengers into all lands, and opened the gates of her sacred sanctuary to the world; when judicial blindness is removed, and every providence, and every judgment, strikes the intended moral home to the heart; when the Spirit of God, abundantly poured out, spreads his enlightening and softening influence; then shall the joyful sound spread from lip to lip, from family to family, from land to land, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Then shall be seen the flow of nations into the Church. A few streams have been already directed thither, but this shall be the general flow. The tide of people, long flowing from God, shall turn, and flow back to him. One people after another shall come till none be left behind, and the whole world bows at the footstool of Jehovah. O God, hasten this time! "Let the people praise thee; yea, let all the people praise thee."

The text is followed by a verse which suggests the concluding lesson to ourselves. "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." Even while waiting for the glorious period described and promised in the preceding prophecy, the Church is called to "walk in the light of the Lord."

1. Walk by this light of truth yourselves.

2. Set the glory of these splendid scenes before you, and let them encourage you to increasing exertions for the spread of truth, holiness, and love throughout the earth.

SERMON LVI.—*Jerusalem Above.*

“But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all,” Gal. iv, 26.

THERE are typical persons, as well as things, in the Old Testament; and we are indebted to the writings of St. Paul for an explication of several, which, in themselves, and in their relations to ourselves, are highly important. Thus is Abraham described as the father of all true believers, because Isaac was the fruit of a Divine promise, and preternaturally born; and Sarah, in reference to the same principle, as “the mother of us all.” The Jews claimed to be the Church of God, because of mere fleshly descent. The apostle argues, that, because they had nothing else to plead, they were typified by Ishmael, who was cast out of Abraham’s family; and so their type was not Sarah, a free woman, but the bond woman, Hagar, whose seed could not inherit. “Which things,” we are told, “are an allegory,” representing “the two covenants,” one being given from Mount Sinai, the other wonderfully opened to us on Calvary. “The one, from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage;” the other, proceeding from the spiritual Sion, or Jerusalem, leading to “the glorious liberty of the children of God.” For, according to the ancient (and, indeed, the modern) rule of slavery, the children follow the condition of the mother, whether bond or free, so the Jews are represented as though belonging to Mount Sinai, which had also the name of Agar, signifying a rock, “and answering to the Jerusalem which now is,” as the Jews had made it, having turned from all that was evangelical in their own law, and converted even their sacrifices into mere human works, instead of making them, as of old time, expressions of faith. But of Christians the apostle speaks as being the children of the Church, the true spiritual Jerusalem, and therefore free, as being born of a free mother. “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.”

Having thus opened the connection of these words, I propose to call your attention,

I. To St. Paul’s description of the Church of Christ, as it exists in the present world: “Jerusalem, above, and free.”

II. To the filial sentiment with which we ought to regard it. She is “the mother of us all.”

III. To the animating anticipations we are thus taught to form of the Church, as glorified.

I. Jerusalem, which is above and free.

1. Above; that is, seen in connection with God, and the scenes of the heavenly world.

The Church is the only institution among men directly of Divine appointment. The visible Church of the Jews had this character; but that has passed away. The same hand built the Christian Church. Its laws, its services, its ministers, its discipline, its festivals, are all from God. In every thing else we see man; whether government, laws, or institutions of any kind. But here we see God. “Jerusalem which is above.”

Her Head is from above. While Christ was on earth, of whom was his Church composed? Of a few simple, half-instructed men who followed him,—him a persecuted and suffering man. Yet even then he could say of himself, “The Son of man which is in heaven;” and, “I came down from heaven.” What a glory thus rested upon all this humble appearance! When he ascended to heaven, he took his seat above; but the bond of connection is not broken. He is still the Head of his Church; and though it be composed of humble men, often of persecuted men, yet is Christ, their Head, in heaven, bringing his many sons to glory. Yes, and putting down kings or setting them up; breaking, or blessing the nations, giving peace, or causing trouble, that he may first purify his Church, and then make it a praise in the earth.

If we take the Church as a whole, though it is in part on earth, yet the greater number of its members are in heaven. Ever since the first age, there have always been more in heaven than on earth. When our Lord’s Church was composed only of a handful of disciples, and his flock indeed a “little flock,” even then there were patriarchs, and prophets, and saints above, all living to the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob; “for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” And when the more numerous members were wasted and scattered, a disciple might, as John, be introduced above, and permitted to behold “a great multitude whom no man could number;” and inquiring, “What are these? and whence came they?” to receive the reply, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” And to that great number, what multitudes have been added, and are still adding! What a glorious thought! You are a few; they, a vast multitude. You are hard toiling; they are at rest. You are struggling in the contest; they enjoy the victory. You are sorrowing; they are exulting. But, great as the differences appear, it is our own Church still. The grace which is in us leads to glory. We are heirs, as well as they, though not yet in possession, as they are. The love which has glorified them is the same love which is fixed on us. Let us be faithful unto death; we, too, shall then be finally victorious; we, too, shall wear the crown, and possess the kingdom; we, too, shall join to sing the same song, to swell the same chorus.

Our Jerusalem is above, because her members all fix their affections there, and thither tend, as to the great end of their profession. If a man has no other reason for being a Christian than the mere custom of the country in which he dwells, that is not a Scriptural one. True Christianity begins and goes on with entire reference to things Divine and heavenly. Its very first movements refer to the wrath to come, from which there is the desire to flee; and to the blessedness to come, the attainment of which is sought with the whole heart. Faith in Christ is exercised in reference to eternal life. Holiness is the meetness for “the inheritance of the saints in light.” Christian diligence is exercised, that we “may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” Fear, “lest a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.” Hope “enters into that within the veil.” Joy refers to “the glory of God.” Courses of duty,—what are they but a running for the prize, “which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give in that day?” And let me remind you that

without this Christianity is a name empty and fruitless ; and that, in proportion as Christian truth lives and acts in you, it must rouse you to seek the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

2. And Jerusalem which is above is free, and, therefore, so are her children.

From the bondage of seeking salvation as by works of law ; from the guilt of sin ; from its dominion : and thus have they the delightful prospect of being made partakers of that "glorious liberty" which "the children of God" enjoy in heaven. But the text,

II. Calls our attention to those filial sentiments with which the Christian Church is to be regarded by us : she is "the mother of us all ;" and therefore our feelings toward her are to be those of children toward a venerable parent, from whom being, nature, care, and discipline, have been derived.

The general idea presented to us is, that, if we are indeed spiritual, under God, we owe all to the Church. Even from the time of Abraham, she has shone as the light of the world. Where else do we see light ? All is dark beyond. To her God has committed the preservation of his truth ; for unto her have been committed the oracles of God. This truth her ministers have proclaimed ; for it her confessors have suffered, her champions earnestly contended. Her sages have studied it for you ; and the precious pearl, undiminished in value, is all your own. In stormy seasons she has sheltered her lamps in the recesses of the sanctuary ; and in happier times has placed them on high to guide and save. Her ministry has been transmitted down to us, because the Lord of the harvest, mindful of his own promise, hath continued himself to send forth labourers into his vineyard. And thus is there continued to us that wondrous instruction, which, if weak in itself, is mighty through God, to which you owe the salvation of your own souls, and the caution and comfort with which you are enabled to walk. And the Spirit of God is in the Church. This is its distinguishing, as well as crowning, blessing. "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion ; for great is the holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." Thus is her sacred volume full of living and saving words ; thus is her ministry with power ; and thus are her ordinances "wells of salvation," out of which water is drawn with joy. To the Church you owe your hallowed friendships. Through her you have the communion of saints, the care of others for you, and their earnest prayers on your behalf. To the Church, as obeying the solemn command of God, you owe your Sabbaths, those blessed days of holy rest. And in the Church it is that God manifests himself. His power and glory are in his sanctuary ; there are the blessings of his grace received ; there the mysteries of his providence understood, so far as they may be understood in this world. Take the Church away, and you have removed the salt of the earth, the light of the world.

Then, as your mother, honour and love the Church. Make no broils nor divisions in her family. Listen to her voice ; it is always the voice of love. Follow her godly discipline ; it is established for your advantage.

III. We now turn to the animating anticipations of the Church, as glorified, with which the text furnishes us.

The ground of this is, the typical character both of Zion and Jerusalem. Of this sufficient indications are found in the Old Testament. "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." And so in the New Testament: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." The ultimate reference of all this is to the heavenly state of the Church; for in the book of Revelation we see the type of the city of God on earth realized in the city of God in heaven. And if of the earthly type it could be said, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God," how much more of the reality above! Let us, then, turn to the description of it, given to us in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation.

1. Mark the "wall, great and high;" denoting the perfect, impregnable security of those who dwell there.

When the gates are said to be "not shut at all by day," and "there is no night there," the same idea of absolute security is presented.—The gates of that city never need to be closed; for no enemy can even approach it.

2. At the gates are angels; still ushering in the heirs of salvation, and disdaining not to be as porters to this glorious city.

Both here and there we come to an innumerable company of angels. And these gates fronted the four cardinal points, three each way, denoting the influx from all nations. It is not the city of a party, but of redeemed man. The size of the city, intimated by the certain number of furlongs,—twelve thousand on each side, while Babylon, the largest city in the world, was only four hundred and eighty furlongs in circumference,—intimates to us the vast number of its saved inhabitants.

3. Mark the foundations, "garnished with all manner of precious stones;" a statement implying permanency, and thus a marked contrast with the proud cities which man has erected, to be the capitals of some earthly monarchies.

This is the capital of the kingdom of our Lord Christ, the kingdom composed of the spiritual subjects redeemed and subdued by his grace and love. We ask for Nineveh, and its place is not found; for Babylon, and we only find the literal accomplishment of the prophetic description, "heaps, and a dwelling place for dragons, without an inhabitant;" for ancient Rome, and we see the civilized world going to wonder at its ruins, and read the plain inscription of grandeur and vanity. But this city hath undecaying foundations; God is the Builder and Maker, and her glory shall never fade.

4. Mark the circumstance, that in the twelve foundations are inscribed the names of the twelve apostles; the whole being the result of their doctrine, the doctrine of Christ crucified, of atonement for sin, for they are specially mentioned as "apostles of the Lamb."

This seems to be indicated by the continued use of the number twelve, either simply, or multiplied into itself. There are twelve gates; twelve angels; twelve tribes of the spiritual Israel; twelve foundations; twelve thousand furlongs; and the height, twelve times twelve,—one hundred and forty-four cubits. These symbols teach us the harmony

and proportion of the city. They will show that the will, the plan, the purpose, of the great Builder, though opposed in this world, (and hence its disorder,) shall there be impressed upon every thing, and upon every being. But they teach us more. They bring before us the result of the labours of the glorious twelve, the twelve apostles of the Lamb; in other words, of that pure Christianity which they taught. False, corrupted Christianity can send no citizens there. All this glory springs from the religion of the New Testament alone. What a monument to its honour! And are we to be ashamed of avowing it? Shall we take an error, however gaudy, in its place? Shall we be moved by the sneers of infidelity, the cavils of skepticism, the contempt of the wisdom of this world? See, for this you can see, the monument which true religion raises in the renewed heart. See those which it has raised and is still raising, in the world. But in this glorious city you have the eternal monument erected to the praise of the glory of the Divine grace and wisdom. In the multitude of its inhabitants you see "the nations of them which are saved;" the pardoned, the sanctified, the glorified.

5. There are some other interesting circumstances, on which, however, we can but touch.

"And I saw no temple therein." The whole city is a temple, all filled with the presence and glory of God. No holiest of all is there, where every part is most holy. "The Lord God almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it." All are filled, and sanctified, and beatified, by his intimate and fully-manifested presence. God is all in all; all things in and to all. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." And the expression may be taken literally. To this city may the promise be fitly applied, "But the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God, thy glory." What wonderful splendour was that which, penetrating the very body of our Lord, when he was transfigured, and "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light!" But take the expression spiritually. There shall no longer be the lower light of instrumental instruction. It is therefore said, "And they need no candle," in allusion to the lamps of the sanctuary. The glimmering truth of Judaism, though like a lamp shining in a dark place, gave place to the light of Christianity, fitly compared to the great luminaries of heaven, the word and ordinances of our religion. But in this city God is himself the light, by the more immediate communications of a special revelation. Unclouded light shall thus be cast on every subject to which thought can turn. And "the nations of them that are saved" are there. Even here the communion of saints is delightful. When we see exalted goodness now, we "glorify God" because of those in whom it is found. What then shall be the effect of the mutual intercourse and influence of the whole company of the saved of the Lord? Then, there is the constant influence of the Holy Spirit, imaged by "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." While by the river is "the tree of life," for the eternal preservation of health. The saints shall be for ever kept from falling.—And there shall be "the throne of God and of the Lamb;" and "his servants shall serve him," attending on their great Sovereign; they shall themselves "reign for ever and ever" in the highest glory and felicity; and "they shall see his face," the final object of believers in

all ages, "seeing him as he is;" and so shall they "be like him," so transformed into the same image that "his name shall be in their foreheads." And thus shall they be fully free from every part of the penalty of sin; and, all the former things being done away, God shall dwell with them, and they with God, for ever and ever.

SERMON LVII.—*The Design of the Promises of God.*

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature," 2 Peter i, 4.

IF we look at man as he now is, a fallen creature, it is hard to conceive that human nature ever bore the image of God. Was that earthly mind ever a heavenly one? Did that dark, gross, and malignant nature ever walk in the light of truth? Did it ever glow with unmixed benevolence? Was it ever beautified by holiness? But for the testimony of God himself, we should never have thought that when the searching eye of Him who cannot be deceived, fell upon the prototype of man, he pronounced him very good.

But if man has fallen, can he rise? Of restoration, indeed, all men have had some hope. The most of them, however, looked not for this till the soul should be discharged from matter, which they considered as necessarily evil. Others have expected it in this life, but only in a very low and imperfect degree.

The Gospel alone places this glorious possibility full before us.—The seat of sin is in the soul, not the body; and the soul shall be renewed in righteousness. Nor is it a low and partial attainment to which we are called. It is to be a redemption worthy of the price which purchased it; a work worthy of its great agent, God; a new creation; an elevation, not to any standard found in man himself, but to one far above him. The promises were given, the text tells us, that we might be partakers of the Divine nature. So it was at first. Man was created in the image of God. And so it shall be again. Man shall be renewed in the image of Him that created him, in righteousness and true holiness.

My brethren, let us look steadfastly at this great hope set before us. If it ever is to become ours, we must earnestly aspire after it, and strive for so great a prize. But let us first endeavour to conceive aright of this branch of God's mercy to us in the Gospel; then shall our faith rest upon a sure ground, and our hope be stimulated by a definite and apprehended object.

We inquire then,

I. In what sense we are to be partakers of the Divine nature; and,

II. How the value of the promises of the Gospel is displayed by their connection with this end.

I. In the Divine nature are attributes properly incommunicable; such as cannot, in the nature of things, be imparted; such as cannot be even imitated by creatures. It is peculiar to him to exist in and from himself, resting upon the moveless rock of his own eternal sufficiency;

while a creature is a dependent being, and ever must remain so. It is peculiar to him to be from everlasting to everlasting. Even though our own being shall have no end, we shall fill but half the round of vast eternity. It is peculiar to him to have supreme dominion. This cannot be shared; for then it would not be supreme. This supremacy of dominion is included in the import of the term, God; and whatever power other beings may possess, they have it from him; in subordination to him they hold it; and for the use of it, they must give account to Him that is higher than they. Absolute perfection, that which is liable to no injury, admits of no diminution, is capable of no advancement, is peculiar to him. In the creature there is no perfection which is not liable to decrease, on the one hand, and capable of increase on the other.—Finite cannot equal infinite.

It is, then, in moral attributes that we are to look for this participation of the Divine nature; in those which, indeed, constitute the very glory of that nature; the others being adorable as they are exercised and employed by a perfect wisdom, rectitude, and love. But let it be here observed, that the promise is not that we shall be raised into something like God; some mere imitation of what is morally perfect in him. Such, often, is mere human virtue, the fruit of education or example; that which is cultivated from motives of honour or interest. A flower, this, without a living root; a mere surface show of excellence, unconnected with conscience or piety. We are to be partakers of the Divine nature. There is to be a communication on the part of God, and a reception on our own, of those principles on which all that is pure and holy in God may be said to depend; a communication continued to us, on which the growth and permanency of those principles rest. Such is the doctrine of Scripture. We are not left to human imitation, but have the promise of a Divine communication: a difference this, as great as the imitation of the sun in the heavens, by painting his beams on canvass, and the reflection of his image as formed on the moon and planets, which receive his light, imbibe his influence, and in their various degrees partake of his nature.

The moral nature of God, thus to be participated by believers, may be summed up in the three terms, knowledge, holiness, and love. On each of these we may briefly dwell.

1. Knowledge.

The power of knowing is the property of spiritual beings. It is not merely to perceive, in the low degree which belongs to irrational animals, but to apprehend, to remember, to compare, to infer, and from particular, to bring out general, truths, which are to be laid up in the mind for meditation or action. In this respect, all rational creatures bear an image, though a faint one, of God the infinite intelligence.—That knowledge, however, in which St. Paul says we are created anew, after the image of God, is not mere intellectual capacity. This we may have before this spiritual renovation; and though, in this world, religion may profitably exercise it, it is not always that even religion improves it. This knowledge is the knowledge of things as good or evil, as right or wrong, as tending or not tending to our own happiness, and that of the whole creation. Infinitely perfect is this knowledge in God. He cannot mistake the nature and tendencies of things; and it is this which gives his laws their perfection. He cannot enjoin evil,

and he restrains us from nothing good. What he commands, is necessary; what he inhibits, prejudicial to our own welfare, and the harmony and blessedness of the whole universe of beings. But man has lost this knowledge; and the consequence is sin, disorder, and misery, both in himself and in the world. Every act of a sinner is a stab to his peace and real interest, and to those of society at large. These precious promises, however, open to us the restoration of what we have lost. God himself, by his own revelations, "hath showed thee, O man, what is good." He has marked the moral differences of things, in order to our choice of that which is excellent. And by the indwelling of his teaching Spirit, opening these truths to our mind, and rendering us discerning to apply them, he makes us partake, in our degree, of his own knowledge, his infallible judgment of things. Then it is that we walk in the light. Our path becomes an open path. We no more put good for evil, or evil for good. We are no more cheated and deluded by mere appearances. We find a sure way for our feet, and so are enabled to escape the snares of death.

2. Holiness.

This is essential to God. It is that principle in him, whatever it may be, which has led him to prescribe justice, mercy, and truth, and to prohibit their contraries under penalties so severe; that principle, which is more than a mere approval of the things which he enjoins; which makes him love righteousness, so that his countenance doth behold the upright with complacency, and the wicked with such displeasure and abhorrence, that even their prayer is an abomination; that, for the restoration of which among his creatures, he sent his own Son into the world. This we call holiness.

The holiness of a creature, as to actions, is, conformity to the will of God, which is the visible declaration of his holy nature. That conformity implies justice, a rendering to all their due;—a large duty, referring, not only to man, but likewise to God, to whom are to be given the honour and worship he requires from us: perfect truth and sincerity in every thing, so that all outward acts shall concur with the heart, and the heart with them: and the strict regulation of every temper and appetite, so that they may be kept within the bounds prescribed, beyond which they become impurity and sin. But there must be principle from which all this must flow, or it is only external and imitative; and that principle is found only in the new man, that which comes from this participation of the Divine nature. It is that new disposition and tendency of all his faculties and affections, produced by the inward working of the Spirit of God, which makes him approve of what is right, and true, and excellent, universally, and disapprove of what is contrary. This sacred influence lays hold of the will, and so causes the will to lay hold of whatever is holy; it lays hold of the affections, and holiness thus becomes a delight, an object of love, desire, and enjoyment. This is the state to which the Gospel calls us, so that our regard to holiness is not to be partial and unsteady, or implying a cold approbation of what is right, but full and affectionate, flowing from the new nature which God gives, and which God must by his presence sustain. Thus shall we be holy in all manner of conversation.

3. But the Divine nature is love.

Who can doubt this, when he sees the happiness of the creatures

so manifestly the end of their creation? when we can trace all misery to another source? when we see the mercies he mixes with his judgments, always bringing some good out of evil? when he spared not his own Son, but gave him freely for us all? when he so condescends to us, is so forbearing, so slow to anger, so ready to forgive, so abundant in goodness and truth? Brethren, if there be any moral beauty and glory in being thus like God; if meekness is to be chosen before anger, patience before petulance, kindness before severity, a forgiving disposition before implacability, a delight in the feelings and acts of benevolence before the diabolical pleasure of doing ill or refusing good; then is it our exalted privilege thus to be partakers of the Divine nature. For resemblance to God in this particular respect comes to us in the same way as the rest. Our nature cannot be raised to this by the mere imitative virtues. These Divine virtues are the fruit of the Spirit, living in us, implanting his own graces, and exalting our nature by the infusion and mighty energy of his own vital influences.

II. We observe, that the value of the promises of the Gospel is specially displayed by their connection with this end. "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature."

To raise men to this state is matter of promise, and therefore of grace. We might have been left to the sin and degradation we had sought. And the promises thus given to us, all of them, suppose the covenant of grace. That covenant is a voluntary engagement on the part of God, founded in the atoning sacrifice of his Son, and by that sacrifice likewise ratified. The moment we embrace it by faith, it stands sure as to ourselves, and all its promises are our own. And when we consider their great design, to make us partakers of the Divine nature, how clearly and brightly does it display their value! They appear to us of unspeakable value; "exceeding great and precious."

1. They are so in respect of the honour which this great attainment puts on man.

Think of every thing called honour which excludes this. You give a man wealth, and power, and a name; and his heart is the corrupt seat of evils which will make all that he possesses a curse and a shame to him. Belshazzar sports in his splendid hall among his fawning courtiers; and the hand of God writes in blazing characters before him, "Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting." The true honour of man is in that which makes him here the object of the Divine approbation and favour, and hereafter of open acknowledgment. Among the true servants of God, all the aspiring children of ambition will desire to stand at last, their too tardy judgment at length confessing that all beside this was but as dust, and lighter than vanity itself.

2. Consider this value in respect to interest.

What is the real interest of man, but the attainment of the favour and image of God? It is not often that even our outward interests are disjoined from piety. Sometimes it may be so, but ordinarily, in our respective stations, godliness is indeed profitable to all things. It increases our happiness, and saves from many distresses. But even were it not so, how is it that interest is to be estimated? Do we say that that which is profitable for one day is more valuable than that

which is profitable for our whole life? Take this, then, as your rule. Our life is but for a moment, our whole being is eternal; and if we are partakers of the Divine nature, then are our eternal interests secured. As without holiness no man shall see the Lord, so the holy man shall ascend up the hill of the Lord, and dwell in his holy place.

3. Consider this value in respect of peace.

There can be no peace to the wicked. Every evil brings its own punishment with it in the disquietude which it occasions. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and not be burned?" But the peace which is enjoyed when we are partakers of the Divine nature is peace of conscience,—we know that God is reconciled to us; peace, as the result of the subjugation of disturbing appetites and passions; peace, as the fruit of the conscious presence of God, and the testimony that we please him; peace, as the effect of calm, satisfied dependence on God, to whom we commit our way, and on whom our mind is stayed; a peace, this, which flows from the high and exhaustless fountain, remaining with us when other sources are dried up, and can yield us no supply.

4. Consider this value in respect of usefulness.

Knowledge is a powerful instrument of God, when prompted by benevolence, and sustained by consistency of character. And where there is participation of the Divine nature, there we find all these elements of usefulness, knowledge, holiness, and love.

5. And, lastly, consider this value in reference to hope.

Here alone is found true hope, the good hope through grace, the expectation of the righteous which shall not be cut off. Nor is this the hope of mere safety. It refers to the continual, eternal increase of the good which we enjoy. Finite can never become infinite; and, therefore, a perpetual advancement in knowledge, holiness, and love, is spread before us.

In conclusion,

Recollect that you must thus partake of the Divine nature, or you can never have fellowship with God here or hereafter. "How can two walk together, unless they be agreed?"

Recollect, these promises are to all who seek their accomplishment with their whole heart. God is faithful; nor can his word fall unfulfilled to the earth. And these promises are addressed to us in all their fulness. They show us that good, and perfect, and acceptable will which we are called to prove, to experience for ourselves.

Examine them, therefore. See to what blessings they refer. Be not in ignorance of this the good pleasure of God respecting you.

And plead them in earnest prayer. Take with you these words in coming to God. In asking that his own promises to us be accomplished, we ask according to his will; and we know that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us, and we shall have the petitions that we desired of him.

SERMON LVIII.—*The Immutability of God's Counsels.*

“The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations,” Psalm xxxiii, 11.

THERE is an argument against the day of judgment, employed by the scoffers mentioned by St. Peter, that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” But what does this prove, even were it allowed to the full? Does it prove that all things shall continue without change, and for ever? It only proves, in the first place, that God is “long suffering,” manifesting “the richness of his goodness,” in his “forbearance” toward us; and, secondly, that his plans are large, running through long courses of time, and that He who is eternal has no need to consult those measures of duration by which mortals regulate their affairs. “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

But the very objection, pointless as it is, supposes a truth at which all scoffers, at which sinners of every kind, may well tremble. Why do all things continue as they were? Why is there an orderly course of nature? It is because their great Ruler is himself above all change, and can, when he pleases, give stability to the frailest and most perishing creature, and order to the most unruly. And this is but a visible manifestation of his moral immutability. He is the same hater of evil, the same judge of the wicked “yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

To the immutability of the Divine counsels as founded upon the immutability of his nature, David turns in the text, and there shelters his own interests, and those of the Church. Let us, also, endeavour to derive instruction from it; and, that the subject may be brought more fully before us, I shall make some remarks,

I. Upon the Divine counsels generally; and,

II. Upon that particular view of them which the text contains: they stand fast “for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.”

I. It is impossible for us to receive, as we do from the word of God, authentic information that there are counsels in the Divine mind, as to our world, and all that dwell in it, without perceiving how much the revelations of this book rise above the low conceptions of even the wisest men of heathen antiquity, and of all who in our own day prefer their darkness and doubt to the light and certainty of heavenly truth. For,

1. We thus know that God, who made all things, does concern himself with our world; that he has not left it to itself, as they thought necessary for his honour; that his regards are not confined to what men call great; that even individuals are noticed by him, as it is expressed, in some verses following the text, in a way that no man could have conceived, had not God himself declared it. “The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.” Thus do we know especially that “the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from

death, and to keep them alive in famine ;" that "the hairs of their head are numbered," and that "all his saints are in his hand;" that, as there is nothing too high for him, so nothing is too low ; for "he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper:" in a word, that instead of being absorbed in his own glory, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," but "he compasseth our path, and our laying down, and is acquainted with all our ways."

2. We are taught that this interposition is one of counsel ; that is, of deliberation and wise purpose.

It is not the intervention of a blind power, which some have called fate, others, necessity ; not of an intelligence which some have fancied to be bound by what they call a fixed and determinate plan ; but one of counsel ; that which possesses infinite resources, is able to expatiate in them, and can vary its measures, as the highest and best considerations may require. Of this counsel, this wondrous wisdom, all nature is a standing indication ; but we shall see that indications yet more clear and impressive are furnished by the Divine government.

Of the works of God in the material world we may indeed say, "In wisdom hast thou made them all." How vast and orderly is the frame of the world ! How accurately are its great powers balanced ! By what mysterious operations are the grossest elements converted into substances the most useful and beautiful ! And by what singular management is the death of winter made subservient to the life and fruitfulness of summer ; and storms and tempests made to clear our atmosphere, and spread invigorating health around us ! But in nature, wonderful as are these operations, there is nothing to resist, to repel, to dispute. All are his servants, and every thing fulfils his word. He saith to one, Go, and it goeth ; to another, Come, and it cometh. But in his moral kingdom we see a world in rebellion. There is not a principle naturally in our hearts, but it is a rebel principle also. Every affection, every will, is ready to start up in defiance, wrestling with his authority, and pursuing a course contrary to his commands. If his government were one of rigid justice only, there would be no difficulty here. Who could stand before him when he came to vindicate his own laws, and "avenge him of his enemies?" But judgment is "his strange work," and mercy the delight of his administration. The counsel, in this case, is to make good triumph over evil, and evil itself the occasion of good. How adorable is that wisdom which, influenced by goodness, wins back a rebellious heart to love and obedience without violence to its freedom ! which makes our very "wickedness to correct us, and our backslidings to reprove us !" which raises, by secret operation, the dark and callous element of a worldly nature, into spirituality and heavenly mindedness ! which turns the winter of our afflictions into the bloom and fruit of evangelical graces ! which makes the vanity of earth the instrument of placing our affections where alone true joys are to be found ! which, on a larger scale, subordinates the darkness of one age to the instruction of another ! which, when justice, long delayed, must reject the Jews, sends salvation abroad among the Gentiles ! which, when persecutions scatter the faithful in one place, diffuses the seed of truth into many others ! which, when the corruptions of superstition and intolerance break down the frame of society, opens, by the very strifes and hatred of the wicked, the long-closed door of access for

the free publication of the Gospel ! and which, finally, although by the mysterious permission of evil, sin hath abounded, yet makes grace much more abound ; so that, "as sin hath reigned unto death, even so doth grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord !" Well may we say, with St. Paul, when one branch of this great subject was before him, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !"

3. Let us take another view of the Divine counsels. They are supreme and uncontrollable.

This it is which gives to good men so entire and joyful a confidence : "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord." There is, indeed, vain and even absurd as it may seem, and as it is, a frequent contest of counsel between the creature and God. But there are three circumstances which must ever stamp with weakness the counsels of every finite being. They are narrow and confined ; but his comprehend the universe and all its creatures. "It is as high as heaven ; what canst thou do ? deeper than hell ; what canst thou know ?" And as the counsels of the creature are bounded as to extent, so, likewise, as to time. We cannot extend them beyond our foreknowledge ; that is very limited, and the future, in fact, quite dark to us. But God sees the end from the beginning ; nor can any thing surprise him as unexpected. Again : counsel is nothing without agency ; and how little of this can we command ! nothing, indeed, but what God permits : but he commands from the angel to the atom, and each executes his will. How wretched, then, the attempt to strive with God ! Of the beings who thus attempt, the most intellectual and subtle is probably Satan. In the pride of his heart he has contended against the Divine counsels, and partial success has been permitted, to show that God shall "overcome when he is judged." He has probably mistaken this permissive success for real power ; but has been only working his own downfall. As, when he appeared to triumph in the death of Christ, that very death deposed him, and liberated man, so shall be the grand issue of all his partial and temporary triumphs over truth and goodness : they shall terminate in his final defeat, and the illustrious accomplishment of all that he has spoken "by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."

And this is designed to be the rock of our faith. God may have many secret counsels, and these secret things belong unto him ; but on all he has revealed we are called to rest. He declares, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble ?" Every promise, whether to his Church or to ourselves, rests upon this, "I have spoken it, I also will bring it to pass ; I have purposed it, I will also do it." We are to be "fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to perform ;" and so, not to "stagger at the promise of God through unbelief."

" When thou wilt to work proceed,
Thy purpose firm, none can withstand,
Frustrate the determined deed,
Or stay the' Almighty hand."

II. But our text calls us to consider the stability of the Divine counsels. "They shall stand for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

We may illustrate this,

1. By ancient instances of the fulfilment of delayed purposes.

It was the contemplation of this which caused the inspired writer to exclaim, "Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." And of this there are many illustrious examples. A son was promised to Abraham; many years did he wait, but the child of promise was at last given to his waiting faith. Canaan was promised to his seed, and long were they held bondsmen in Egypt; but the appointed time came, and they journeyed to the place of which God had said that he would give it them. It was by faith in the steadfastness of God's word that Elijah sent his servant to the top of Carmel; nor was he discouraged, by the feeble sign which first appeared, but at once looked for the abundance of rain. When the period of Judah's captivity in Babylon was about to expire, there were no apparent circumstances which indicated the approaching deliverance. Daniel only understood by books the number of the years to be accomplished in the desolations of Jerusalem; but he trusted in the stability of the Divine counsel, and set his face to seek the Lord God by prayer and supplications. Long was the time which elapsed after the first promise of the seed of the woman, but the great salvation at length appeared. What, then, is the grand moral of all such instances, but that the counsels of the Lord stand? "Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

2. We have another illustration in the steadfastness of his holy law.

That is itself the result of his counsel; his perfect knowledge of us and our interests. It is not the mere expression of authority, but of wisdom too, and wisdom directed to our happiness. It is the same in all ages. If we carefully examine the patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations, we cannot doubt that. And why always the same, but because perfect, the result of perfect wisdom and goodness? Go to the right hand or to the left, and you fall, not only into a sin, but into a danger or a misery. Take other maxims, and they deceive and betray you. Here is the steady light for the creature: love God, love thy neighbour. O could we more deeply impress ourselves with the wisdom and goodness of God's unchanging law! It is his own judgment of what is best for us. Thus impressed, we should have but one aim, and through the renewal of our nature, this righteousness being fulfilled in us, we should say, "O how I love thy law!" "Thy testimonies have I taken for mine heritage for ever!"

3. This stability is farther illustrated by the constant connection of painful fear and misery with sin.

I see a fact supported by universal and uniform experience. I see men miserable, but I see them sinners. If I ascend the stream of time to its fountain head, it is so. If I travel round the earth, it is still so. If I examine the lowest condition, or climb to the loftiness of state and majesty, still I find it so. Is this by chance? O no! "The thoughts of his heart are to all generations." "There is no peace to the wicked," God himself has said; and, to say nothing of outward miseries, I ask you to consider that which we call conscience.

There is a reproving something in every sinner's breast. He does not court the feeling ; he flees, but it still follows him. He forgets a while, but he is still obliged, by some secret law, to bring his conduct to a rule, and to ask what his God thinks of him ; to anticipate his final account, and, spite of himself, he is wretched. So God has willed ; willed in mercy, that you may fly to him : willed in justice, that his law may be feared. This you cannot alter ; for "the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

4. It is illustrated by the established order of human salvation.

I see man in all ages a sinner and miserable. But there is hope for him. God declares himself a Saviour. Now, we have on record an early example of a man passing into friendship with God. There is "righteous Abel:" look at his sacrifice, and see how acceptance with God was obtained then. It implies confession of sin, and acquiescence in God's appointment to save men through the blood of atonement. And God testified that he was righteous. He was forgiven and assured, and became both a justified and a holy man. Ages have since rolled away, but still is the way of acceptance as it was formerly. And God will never change it. If you continue impenitent, you shall not be saved. If saved, it will be through faith in the great atonement, by which pardon, comfort, and renewal are still obtained. Lean not to devices of your own, but submit to his righteousness, and you shall know that "the thoughts of his heart," his thoughts of pity, of kind, forgiving love, are indeed "to all generations."

5. This is illustrated by the uniform experience of good men.

Take the effects of prayer. You see them in power to trust in God, to rejoice in him, to hold communion with him. So it was of old, and so it is now. O think of this ! Do you not feel that you could converse of the dealings of God with Abraham, as a man of the same order of thoughts and feelings as your own ? Could you not thus converse with David ? Nay, you often do so in his Psalms. Our fathers trusted in him, and they were not confounded ; and this God,—who has been the dwelling place of his people in all generations, and whose "righteousness is unto children's children,"—"this God is our God for ever and ever."

What encouragement we thus have to trust God, not only for ourselves, but also as to his Church and the world ! You know not his particular counsels, but you do know that he has chosen Zion, and that the whole world shall be filled with his glory. Have faith in God. Even should "the kings of the earth" again "set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed," yet shall every valley be exalted, and every mountain and high hill be made low. Though all things should appear unpromising and gloomy, yet does the Lord sit on his throne in the heavens, and "his counsel standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

SERMON LIX.—*Christ sealed by the Father.*

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed,” John vi, 27.

IN the history connected with the text our Lord is seen followed by multitudes, “because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased.”

The impression made upon their minds was deepened still more by the miracle which followed; the feeding of five thousand with the loaves and fishes which multiplied by his blessing under the hands of those who distributed the food, so that all were satisfied.

That he was “that Prophet that should come into the world,” they were now convinced; and, being full of worldly views respecting the Messiah’s kingdom, they would by force have made him their earthly king. He withdrew himself; they find out his retreat; and then he addressed to them a discourse which, in the result, showed how deeply miracles may affect without changing the heart; how loyal a life might be to a Messiah throned in regal pomp, how rebellious still the carnal mind to him as God and a Saviour. They expected that he would have fed them, like Moses in the wilderness, with manna from heaven: employed miraculous powers only for earthly purposes; and then, when they learned that the blessings he offered were spiritual, they were offended, and “walked no more with him.” They went “one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.”

“Moses,” says our Lord, “gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you that true bread from heaven.” “Labour not for the meat that perisheth; but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man giveth you; for him hath God the Father sealed;”—sealed by the miracles of which you have been the witnesses; and which were wrought, not to gratify your curiosity, not to excite a profitless admiration, not to confer temporal benefits; but to lead you to seek those benefits of life and salvation which he came to bestow.

The history of the Jews is the picture of man’s heart. We are ourselves prone to that which we condemn in them. We too often admire that external array of miracles, of doctrines, and of fact, which our religion presents, without regarding those practical and saving purposes for which only it is thus placed before us; and to guard against this, while we direct your attention to that which so strikingly accredits the ministry of Christ, shall be the object of the present discourse.

I call your attention, then,

I. To the eminent manner in which Christ was sealed by the Father.

II. To that great end for which this mighty interposition of God took place,—that we might “labour for that meat which endureth to everlasting life.”

I. Christ was sealed.

And we are interested in this fact, or rather, series of facts, because

in them we see the ground, the commanding motive, which ought to impel us to that practical result which our Lord would impress upon us.

To seal, when the act of a public person, and especially of a sovereign, is to impress the characters of his own signet upon any instrument by which his will is declared, and which is then treated as proceeding from him. For as the characters are peculiar to himself, whenever they are seen, they accredit whatever bears them.

The meaning of the text, then, is sufficiently obvious. The sealing of Christ by the Father is seen in those mighty works, and other circumstances accompanying his ministry, which mark a special interposition and sanction from God; and were, therefore, his public attestation and proof that he was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

Many such seals were put upon the claims of our Lord; and to a few of them I purpose to draw your attention, that you may feel the firmness of the ground of your faith, and be the more powerfully moved to commit your souls into his hands, and to seek his grace.

1. We behold the impress of Divinity upon his doctrine.

Separate from all that external evidence which confirms it, it carries with it a character, an air, a majesty, in which every unsophisticated mind will discern a peculiarity only attributable to God. For when I consider the vastness of the subjects, and the ease with which they are treated; the obscure manner in which the wisest of men have always spoken of them, and the steady demonstrative light which brightens around them whenever our great Teacher opens his lips; that exhibition of the interior man, the secrets of the heart, which his doctrine discloses, so that, as in a mirror, every man on earth shall see the picture of himself; the most anxious inquiries of men so answered as to leave us nothing more to ask;—when to these I add the dignity so worthy of Divine majesty, the condescension so accordant with an infinite love, the indignation so expressive of perfect holiness;—I see upon the seal the characters peculiar to God; and I join in that exultation which flowed from the deeply-affected hearts of them that heard him: “Never man spake like this man!”

2. We have the seal of miracles.

The impression here must be that of the signet of God; of characters known and acknowledged to be peculiar to him, or it is nothing. For the character of a true miracle is not that it is merely a strange and wonderful occurrence, or that it is above the power of many; but that it is above all human power; and that it is so extraordinary, both in its nature and the time of its occurrence, as obviously to show an interposition of God, giving sanction to the claims of his Son.

Such were the wondrous events by which the Father sealed the ministry of our Lord. For when I see diseases cured, not by applications of art, but by a word, a touch; elements change their nature, not by processes of chemistry, but at a volition, as water into wine; when bread multiplies under the hands of its distributors, and five thousand are the witnesses; when winds are hushed, and waves subside, at the authoritative mandate of an apparent human being; when the very dead hear his voice, and they that hear live, come forth, and worship him; and when, in addition to these characters of power, I see that of tender

benevolence, and a fitness almost as wonderful as the power ; what can I say ? Must I not exclaim, with the conquered magicians of Egypt, " Behold, this is the finger of God !" and feel the irresistible force of the words of Nicodemus, " No man can do the miracles which thou doest except God be with him."

3. We see upon our Lord the broad and striking seal of fulfilled prophecy.

To many illustrious instances of this I might direct you, had we time ; but that upon which I shall for a moment dwell is the minute fulfilment of prophecy in Christ ; because here, most unequivocally, we see the impress of the seal of God.

That prophecies should for the most part be general, and wrapped up in figure and type, is highly reasonable. They were not designed to gratify curiosity, nor to bring on the events they describe. The most general of the Divine predictions have, however, a wonderful particularity when explained by the events which truly accomplish them ; such as proves that the future was all one unclouded scene before the eye of the Divine prescience. To show this more plainly, sometimes they are as minute as at others they are general ; that we might feel that had He pleased, he could have made them all so.

In proportion to the minuteness of prophecy is the evidence which it supplies of Divine inspiration. Had it been merely predicted that Babylon should fall by some foreign invader, this would scarcely have been prophecy ; but when Cyrus is mentioned by name, and the drawing off of the waters of the Euphrates, and the night of festivity, were distinctly specified, and it was declared that the city should never more be inhabited, the evidence is plain and irresistible. The world expected a Divine Deliverer. To have said that he would be rejected of his creatures, would have been a bold conjecture ; yet even that had not borne the unequivocal marks of prophecy ; but when we notice the minuteness of the predictions, and their exact and singular fulfilment, every doubt vanishes, and we are compelled to confess the inspiration of the Almighty. Ages before his appearance in the flesh, it was predicted that he should be born of a virgin, and in the city of David ; that he should not only teach, but teach with a particular air and manner ; for he should not cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets ; that he should not only be persecuted, but bear his sufferings with meekness, humility, and silence,—“ He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth ;” that a bone of his should not be broken ; that gall and vinegar should be presented to him to drink ; that he should be numbered with transgressors, and his tomb be that of a rich man ; and that after death he should rise again. Here is the seal of Heaven ; characters of a Divine prescience broad and visible, and so impressed upon him, that we say at once, and in the fullest confidence, “ We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth.”

4. The seals set by the Father upon the mission of his Son, even at his crucifixion, next call our attention, both from their number and striking character.

Yes, we refer for illustrious attestations of the Father, not merely when multitudes followed Christ with admiration, not when he was

putting forth the plenitude of his own miraculous power in his walks of benevolence through the land, when the lame leaped, the sightless eye beheld, and when demons trembled, worshipped, and fled; but in the hour of his greatest apparent weakness, and deepest humiliation; when the rabble cried, "Crucify him," and all his human and infernal enemies were exulting over him.

We have, in this hour, the indirect testimony of God in overruling others to give testimony to Christ. What meant that crowd of women, "bewailing and lamenting him?" At this feast Jerusalem was filled with stranger Jews. These were the people principally on whom the high priests wrought to insult and mock. The common residents in the city had often heard him gladly. The men perhaps were afraid; but the daughters of Jerusalem followed him weeping, when he bore his cross to Calvary. They had heard his discourses; he had healed their relations or themselves; he had taken their children in his arms and blessed them. Their tears were his testimony; and seemed to wash away every rude reproach of the rabble as it fell upon his spotless name.

Even his enemies were compelled to give their testimony to him. What meant those words of Caiaphas, who was made to declare that his death was an expiatory sacrifice; and that he, the victim, was therefore spotless? Pilate was overruled tacitly to declare him the King of the Jews, by the inscription which he placed upon the cross. The soldiers about the cross mocked him; but at length their commander, pagan as he was, cried, "Truly this man was the Son of God." And all the people that had crowded to the execution, practised upon as they had been by the Pharisees, when they saw the things that were done, "smote upon their breasts,"—the action of convicted guilt, of alarm, and grief,—"and returned;" and well they might; for the things that were done were the Father's direct testimony; the seals he put upon the Son even in that hour, the mystical import of which was at least generally made manifest to the beholders.

The same signs and seals appear before us more fully revealed in their import. The sun sinking from his original brightness to deep eclipse, and then breaking forth into undiminished splendour, was a type of that original glory of Christ, which he hid for a time, and that full manifestation of the Divine majesty into which he was about to emerge at the resurrection. The rending of the veil of the temple showed that he had opened a new way to God; and that he was to present the Blood of his sacrifice, and be a Priest in the higher courts of heaven. The earthquake seemed to indicate the changes to be produced in the world by his doctrine; and the rising of the dead proclaimed that life was to flow from the death of our Saviour; spiritual life to those that believe; natural life to those that sleep in death.

5. To the great seals of the resurrection and ascension of Christ I make no other reference than to observe that the gift of the Holy Ghost was the public confirmation of both; and that this is an evidence which remains to this day.

This is connected with an important consideration. It has been sometimes hinted by the opposers of the truth, that the evidence of Christianity must become weaker, as the facts upon which it rests are thrown farther back into antiquity by the lapse of time; or that, at least, we are

not under the same obligation to believe as if we had seen them ourselves. It is, however, easy to show that the evidence of the truth of Christianity has been increasing in strength ever since the days of its Divine Founder; and that, if possible, we are under stronger obligations to believe and obey than if we had seen our Lord himself.

The evidence arising from prophecy becomes increasingly strong. Prophecies, as Lord Bacon observes, have a germinant fulfilment; and many predictions of holy writ, more fully explained by the accumulated facts of history, present a stronger proof of the truth of Christianity than they did in the age of Christ and his apostles.

The same remark will partly apply to miracles. Ages have passed away since the miracles of Christ and his apostles were wrought; and the experience of these ages has proved that those miracles were not natural, though rare, events. It proves, too, that they were not the effects of a secret knowledge. They are proved to be above all human power.

In regard to the gifts of the Spirit, there were certain effects connected with this power, which was said to be from on high; such as peace of conscience, the sense of sins forgiven, spiritual affections, the entire regeneration of the soul, sensible vital intercourse with God. Now, these effects are still found. This is the fact. Wherever they are found they are attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit. Even philosophers cannot assign for them any other adequate cause, much as they have tried. They ought to acknowledge the true one. It is even unphilosophical in them not to do so. But whether they do this, or not, "he that believeth hath the witness in himself." Not only have all believers, by the Spirit given to them, the proof of the resurrection and ascension of Christ; but the seal of the Father to the Son is put upon their own heart, and its impress is felt in their very nature.

We proceed to consider,

II. The great end for which this mighty interposition of God took place,—that we might "labour for that meat which endureth to everlasting life."

If Christ connected one miracle, by which the Father had sealed him, with this practical end, how forcibly do the whole array of seals and attestations press this great truth upon us; that the issue upon which they all bear is our salvation; and that, if this be not effected, to us they are vain and unprofitable!

This important practical result is figuratively expressed; but the figure is strikingly illustrative of the subject to which it is applied.—The people appear to have followed him under the impression that he was the Messiah; and that as Moses fed their fathers with manna in the desert, so he would, by constant miracle, supply them with food. "They said, therefore, unto him, What sign showest thou, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." On this our Lord declares himself to be the true bread from heaven; and then more plainly expresses himself, "And the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Behold, then, brethren; this is the true food of souls; the meat which is said in the text to "endure unto everlasting life." His flesh,

torn, wounded, and put to death on the cross, as the grand sacrifice for sin, is that from which all flows; and which, when received by faith, gives life, strength, and health to the soul of man.

1. From the sacrificial death of Christ flows our pardon; and here the true life of the soul begins.

When the sentence of death is reversed, that separation from God which it involved is repealed. Till then there is animal life, and intellectual life; but not that spiritual life which, when infused, produces the new creature. With every degree of intellectual vigour man may be dead to God; and in a state of penitence he is only quickened to feel bonds which he cannot break, and a death which he cannot of himself avoid. When the pardon is once pronounced, the soul returns to God, the source of life, and lives to him. How mighty is the change which then takes place! The understanding opens upon God in Christ, and sees, what it never saw before, the harmony and glory of all his perfections in justifying the ungodly.—The faith by which he claims the promises in Christ is honoured; and the strength and grace of the promise flow into his heart. The very principles of his nature are renewed. His bonds break under the mighty working within; and he bursts into the glorious liberty from sin.

2. From the sacrificial death of Christ,—the flesh he gives for the life of the world,—flows the heavenly knowledge which is the proper food of the renewed mind.

As scientific knowledge is the food of souls intelligent, so is heavenly knowledge the food of piety. But we know nothing religiously till we know God, and his designs, through him who gave his flesh for the life of the world. Need I stay to prove this? Can I know how I am to obtain pardon, if I close my eyes upon the cross? how emphatically God is love, if I forget that God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all? Can I interpret the promises, unless I know that they embody riches of grace, answering to the riches of the merit which purchased them? Can I estimate the extent of my obedience and duty, until I enter into the truth, that I am a purchased man, not my own, but bought with a price, and therefore bound to glorify my Redeemer in my body and spirit which are his?

Then, this knowledge is the food of the soul. It leads up all the powers of the mind into right and vigorous exercise. Its will to choose, its faith to trust, its desire to breathe after God, its affections to love and hate whatever is loved or hated by its Saviour, are all derived through this medium.

3. From this flows love.

This is the mighty agent in giving life to the soul. But it flows only from this,—“Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.”—This is its constant spring, and will be through eternity. Mighty is the working of perfect love in the regenerate heart. It casts out the fear which hath torment; it unites the soul to Christ; it fixes desire; renders conscience delicately tender, by the fear of offending, which is the constant fear of love; it gives one end to life. When we love, it is easy to labour, and easy to suffer. Gratitude is its essential element, and praise its ceaseless breath.

4. From this flows purity.

How purity feeds the soul, we may judge by contrast. Sin enfeebles. The strongest minds, held under the power of sin, are slow to understand. They have no strength of will; or, if they have that, they have no power to execute. See the mightiest intellects captivated by passion; the conquerors of the world held in chains; the most profound philosophers, the loftiest genius, dragged along by the petty feelings of envy and pride, or the grosser vices. Purity is strength,—the strength of angels, the strength of glorified human spirits. We are strong in proportion to its increase; because as we are made partakers of the Divine nature, we are united more vitally to God.

Thus Christ feeds the soul; and for this end he was sealed. The question now is, whether we are thus fed. You can answer. If you are not thus fed, it is in vain that you go wondering after the miracles of Christ; that you approve of and admire his religion; that you speak of and glory in its evidences; that you feel the force of its doctrines intellectually; glory in the profession of Christianity; and say, "I am of Christ." To feed you with "the bread which endureth to everlasting life" is the great end of redemption. But for this, not a miracle would have been wrought; and if this end be not answered, Christ has even died in vain.

In endeavouring, therefore, to press it upon you to connect this practical end with the sealing of Christ; to lead you to "labour for the meat which endureth to everlasting life;" suffer me in conclusion, to remind you,

1. That if Christ is not this life and bread to your souls, how disproportionate are the means employed to save you, and the end which has in reality been accomplished.

You are a nominal Christian, it is true; but was it for this only that prophets sung the advent of Christ; that angels announced his birth; that the Father sealed his mission with stupendous miracles; that he tasted so bitter a death; rose to so glorious a life; fulfils the ministry of Mediator between God and man; promises the gift of the Holy Spirit; and has constituted the Church? Here is vast preparation for something. Has all this been done, think you, to give you a few opinions more correct? to establish a few forms of worship more simple? while your sins remain unforgiven, your affections unsanctified? that you should have a name to live, and yet be dead? You know it cannot be. You know that the end was your personal and full salvation; and that your Christian profession, while you remain in the world, and under the power of sin, is a standing mockery of the majesty of the very religion of which you bear the name. My brethren, there is a salvation proportionate to the means taken to effect it. The pardon bought with sacred sacrificial blood is yours, if you seek it; the renewal of your nature; a full application of his cleansing blood; a satisfaction, a spiritual growth, a life of the spirit, corresponding with the heavenly character of that living bread, of which whosoever eats shall live for ever. Let me also remind you,

2. Of the aggravated guilt which is incurred by the very signs set before us, unless they accomplish their saving end.

We all acknowledge the depth, the height, the glory, the grace of our Divine religion. It bears upon it the impress of God, the seal of the Father. It is matter of endless wonder; it excites all that is

powerful, and moves all that is tender, in the soul. Here knowledge may ever increase its stores; genius light its fires; poetry drink its inspiration; intellect send down its deepest lines, and find the depth still unfathomable. But if wonder only be gratified, if genius only be excited, if sentiment only be stirred, if knowledge only be fed, wo be to me that I ever beheld that which Heaven has confirmed by its signatures, and revealed in its mercy! All this only heightens my guilt. I have converted into speculation that which should practically save me. I have merely admired that which should have sounded in my ears the alarm of coming judgments. I have talked, and not prayed; I have described to others what I have not applied to myself. I have idly gazed on the majesty of the Gospel, forgetful that it is "the secret place of thunder;" and that the bolt which now lies passive in the hands of a long-suffering God must at length be hurled by inexorable justice. For, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

3. I remind you that for whatever you labour beside the bread of heaven, it is "meat that perisheth."

How melancholy is the sight of men neglecting the enduring realities of piety, and putting forth strenuous efforts only for that which must soon fail them! "Lo, their good is not in their hand." They have no power over it. It is intangible as the air; changeable as the hues of a cloud; and hastens from them like time, which none can stay. The "pleasures of sin" are but "for a season." Every particular pleasure dies, and leaves remorse behind it; and beyond the short season of life even those poor pleasures shall not extend. The earthly good which swallows up your cares, either perishes in your hand, or you perish yourselves in the midst of it. Wit sparkles, and expires; knowledge vanishes away; estimation among men is just as enduring as the breath which pronounces your eulogies. In the midst of all, the spirit pines for a food which yet it distastes; sighs for liberty, and yet clings to its chain; finds no relief but in spiritual slumber, when the loud knock of eternity is heard at the gate of death, and the unprepared spirit is hurried into the presence of Him who would have saved, but must now condemn! O when will you follow Christ for "the meat which endureth to everlasting life!" for principles, affections, and blessings which will live in you and with you when you shall live for ever! principles, affections, and blessings which never perish!

4. I remind you that you must "labour" for this.

You must not rest in an empty wondering after the miracles of Christ, and the glories of your religion. You must labour to acquire right views of personal religion by reading the Scriptures, and attending the ministry of the word; to impress the great principles of Christianity upon your hearts by devout meditation; to obtain all the blessings of salvation by earnest, constant, and believing prayer; to resist every temptation to evil by a holy courage; and, in this world of iniquity, to preserve the soul for God by holy self dedication.

SERMON LX.—*Secret and Revealed Things.*

“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong unto us and to our children,” Deuteronomy xxix, 29.

ONE of the religious privileges that distinguished the seed of Abraham was, that to them were committed the oracles of God. Before the giving of the law, the revelations that God was pleased to make to man were transmitted from age to age by tradition; a mode not favourable to the preservation of the truth of God. *But when the law was given, it was inscribed by the finger of God upon tables of stone. Afterward, with the additional laws communicated through Moses, it was written in a book. The book was laid up in the ark of God; and copies were multiplied among the people. Then they could say, “To the law and to the testimony; if any pretend to come from God, and speak not according to these records, it is because there is no light in them.”

We have this distinguished advantage. Moses and the prophets are in our hands; and, in addition to these writings, we have the sayings of Christ, and the writings of the apostles. The whole of the revelations of God are completed, and written in a book for our instruction; and, since the invention of printing, copies almost innumerable have been circulated. It must, from this circumstance, be preserved from all interpolation to the end of time. With a revelation so comprehensive, one might have supposed men would not only have been contented, but thankful; that they would have received it with adoring gratitude, and apply themselves to understand its meaning; would avail themselves of the promises, and practise the precepts: but still, with respect to many at least, the observation holds good, “They are wise above what is written.” They are wise, not for purposes of piety, but curiosity. We see many persons who, not content with the daily development of the history of their lives, would use unlawful means to penetrate into the future. We see others who would pry into things too high for them; into those things which, in the language of the text, are said to “belong to God;” and thus they are “vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds.” This disposition is justly and strikingly reprovèd in the words of the text.

Israel had entered into covenant with God. Many promises were made to them on condition of their obedience; and many severe threatenings were denounced against them in case of disobedience. Their nation was to be destroyed; their country taken from them; themselves carried into captivity. They were to be a proverb and a reproach to all people. Now the intention of such declarations was, doubtless, to impress upon them the necessity of paying due attention to the commands of God their Creator. As if Moses had seen a variety of curious questions arising in their minds, whether such threatenings would ever take place; the age when these events would occur; and the instruments that should afflict them; he turns their attention from speculation to practice, in the language of the text. “For secret things,” says he, “belong unto the Lord our God; but things that are revealed,”—things

obvious to your knowledge, things easily acquired,—“belong to you and to your children.”

This is the connection of the text. The passage contains two important propositions.

- I. That secret things belong to the Lord our God; and,
- II. That the things revealed belong to us and to our children.

We call your attention,

- I. To the secret things that belong to God.

At first sight it would appear that little is hidden from man; that there are few secrets which God has not entrusted him with. But the proposition doubtless implies that there are many important objects of knowledge known only to God. I am not disposed, however, to limit the field of human knowledge. After all the reserves God has made, matter and mind, religious doctrines and morals, the human intellect, our own nature, time and eternity, and the nature of God himself, all come under our view. Though our knowledge is not infinite, yet it takes hold of many boundless subjects. Recollect that man does not stand at the head of the intellectual creation. We are comparatively but an inferior part of the works of God. There are powers more eminent in nature, beings much higher in intellectual capacity, and in every natural glory, than we are. There are the angels who kept their first estate; the whole hierarchy of heaven, from the lowest angel to the seraphim nearest the throne of God. As a man knows things not only more clearly than a child, but also many things of which a child is utterly ignorant; so it may be supposed that those exalted powers, so much above us in the scale of beings, not only know many things more clearly than we do,—for they see, to use the language of the apostle, “face to face,”—but many things more than we know, or can know, in the present state. But between the highest intelligence and God, still there is an infinite distance; and, of course, what God knows is more extensive than any creature can possibly know.

Probably there are many material existences of which we know nothing, and, indeed, can know nothing. There are, perhaps, many properties of mind, of which we can form no notions in our present state. Probably there are many kinds of moral governments displayed in the universe, under the control of God, of which we have no conception. Yet it is certain that from objects of this kind no temptation to pry into them too curiously can arise. All that we can affirm is, probably, other objects beside those with which we are acquainted do exist; but we know too little of them to excite any curiosity. There is no unholy prying. With respect to them all is distant and all is dark.

Another class of objects from which we are more in danger of indulging the curiosity reprovèd in the text, are those which are partly hidden and partly revealed: partly found exposed in the revelations of this book, shining with different degrees of light; but all in their reasons and detail considerably obscure. Part is prominent on the sacred page; and part is hidden under a veil which Divine wisdom has not seen proper to remove. With respect to objects of this kind we are in more danger of penetrating into God's secrets. We ask, “Where is the harm in indulging in these speculations? Is it not a part of our duty, a part of the glory of our nature, to cultivate religious knowledge?”

I answer, This is true to a certain extent ; but how many persons forget what it is important to remember, that one great part of our moral discipline on earth is to submit, in matters of faith, to God ! We are called to walk by faith, not by sight ; that the virtue of man may be put to the test,—whether he will believe, on the authority of God, the things which our reasoning powers cannot comprehend, and which the mental eye cannot penetrate. If a man will not submit to the authority of God, he as much offends God as if he committed the greatest crime. We should believe the truth, not because it is a doctrine demonstrable, but because God has said it. This is the condition on which all is placed. Though the fruit of the tree of knowledge may appear in many cases desirable to the eye to make one wise ; though it appear good for food ; yet at our peril we pluck it. God has fenced in the holy mountain, and no man with impunity can break through the hedge. We know a perverted use has been made of this doctrine. It has been said, we were prohibited from examining, lest the weakness of our faith should be discovered ; lest it should appear to any person that the interdictions are peculiar to religion ; that they are instituted upon policy ; from a desire to hide something which, if curiously examined, would have weakened its authority and power, and have rendered the whole scheme abortive. But let us recollect that this is not the only prohibition. God demands nothing of us with respect to religion that he does not demand of us with respect to other things. It is not in religion only that God has his secrets ; but also in nature and providence.

Nature has her secrets. It is true, we have heard much, from those persons who have opposed the revelation of God, concerning nature. This world, this goodly universe, has been called the Bible of nature. There is a good and a bad sense of that expression. It has been compared, and invidiously compared, with the Bible of revelation.—Many fine things have been said about this Bible of nature ; as, for instance, that it is free from interpolation. We are told the characters are so legible, that they cannot be corrupted ; that it is known in every land, and speaks a universal language ; and that he who runs may read it. Its supposed plainness is put in contrast with the mysteries of various doctrines of God's book. We are also told that there is no difficulty in its study. Is this true ? On the contrary, it will appear from numerous comments written on this Bible of nature, that it has its difficult paragraphs, and texts hard to be understood ; and also its apparent contradictions, which no comment has been able to explain or reconcile.

Philosophy, also, has her secrets. I do not attempt either to decry or depreciate the labours of philosophy. True philosophy is the handmaid of religion. It follows in her train, and is ever busy in collecting facts to illustrate the wisdom, the goodness, and every other glory of the Creator. It is calculated to give numerous proofs of the goodness of God as revealed in nature. A true philosopher will say, in the language of one of its brightest ornaments, "We are ready to confess that nature has her secrets. All we know is, that we know nothing." Little is done in the way of philosophizing but what relates to method. Even all the investigations of the wise, on this subject, go but a few steps beyond the vulgar. Then all is hesitation ; and they either stop, or pass on in doubt and darkness.

Astronomy has its secrets. Astronomers can tell the number of the stars, and ascertain the laws by which their motions are regulated; but they cannot tell how these laws are carried into execution. They cannot tell what is the substance of which these distant bodies are composed. They cannot solve that apparently easy, but, in fact, difficult question, whether those stars are inhabited or not? They cannot inform us what is the extent of the universe. All these are secrets.

Anatomists, by their curious inquiries, can name the parts, explain the economy, and point out the uses of the animal frame, that wonderful structure; but they cannot explain the laws of muscular motion, or the connection between the will and that motion,—why, when I will, I move my hand or my foot. They cannot tell how we grow. They cannot say how we live, or how we die. All these are secrets.

The chemist, though he tortures nature with his fires, to extort the secret, finds but a very partial confession.

Those who study the philosophy of the human mind, in all the pride of their terms, cannot tell how a single perception is produced; how it is that we remember past, or perceive present, objects,—those which surround us, as well as those which are at a distance. None of the operations of the human mind can be explained, though they are subjects of daily consciousness, and though the operations are in our own breasts. There, where we are more particularly at home, we may be said to be strangers. The vulgar see effects, for which the philosopher assigns causes; but these may be only the effect of other causes; these the effects of previous causes; and so on. Nor can any person tell how far the influence of causes and effects extends. Nature presents daily difficulties.

Providence presents secrets as well as nature. It would be strange, indeed, if it did not. By providence I mean that branch of it that relates to God's government of man as a moral agent. How great a mystery the economy of God is with respect to man, may appear from this circumstance, that no man can judge of Divine Providence with respect to himself. If it is the case that providence has its mysteries, we are called in providence, as well as religion, to bound our inquiries, and submit to God's authority.

The history of every man's individual life presents many mysteries which he cannot explain. "No man," said that sagacious observer of human nature, Solomon, "no man knows what is good or evil for him by all that is before him." How is this proved in constant experience! None of us can say, with respect to any particular incident of our lives, that this is a blessing, or that is a curse, till we have seen its conclusion. You meet with an affliction. You deem it an evil; and it produces good. You meet with a gratification. You call it a blessing; and it brings with it a train of evil consequences. There is no person, whose understanding has been improved by experience and observation, that dare challenge Divine Providence with respect to the blessings or evils of his life. No man who has paid attention to himself, and to the manner in which God has governed his life, dare say either that his present enjoyments are good, or his present afflictions evil. If, then, we are so baffled with the history of ourselves, how imperfect our judgments must be as to what is fit and proper for God to do! Shall we presume to scan and pronounce on the plan of God's general go-

vernment, which comprehends all nations and all variety of circumstances? which is connected, not only with time, but with eternity? Surely every person will acknowledge, with the psalmist, and say, with respect to these things, "This knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

Though that is a secret to us, it belongs to God. High upon his throne he looks upon the works of his hands, and penetrates the future of time. He knows the tendency, and can calculate the ultimate result of all his plans. "Known unto him are all his works from the beginning." Notwithstanding the equity of his proceedings, in many respects they are mysterious. Though we must acknowledge that justice and judgment form the pillars that support his throne; yet let us never forget that clouds and darkness are round about him. He has drawn a veil before the face of his throne; and behind that he transacts the affairs of the universe, beyond the scrutiny of the human eye. Curiosity may ask, "Lord, what is this?" Men do ask; but they receive no other reply than, "What is that to thee? follow thou me;" for "he giveth no account of his matters." His government of the world has its secrets; but who will on this account deny God's providence, and say that he does not govern the world? We know not why it was that evil was permitted to enter into the world; why man kept his first state for so short a period; why true religion was so soon corrupted; why, when the redeeming scheme was announced, it was so partially received; why the perfect system of religion itself, as given by Christ, was corrupted, and to this day has made so little progress in the earth; why it appeared for so many ages to have lost its efficacy; why God's peculiar people themselves became corrupt. These and a thousand other questions, with respect to God's general providence, are all secrets.

With respect to individual cases, we know not why this man is afflicted, and another exempt from affliction. We know not why the good are so often afflicted,—“plagued every morning, and tried every moment,”—while vice is crowned with prosperity; why the wicked are continued long on the earth, while useful lives are often quickly cut off. The light which seems designed to enlighten the world is quenched in darkness. We know not why riches are often given to the churl, while persons of a liberal and bountiful spirit have their hands chained up with poverty. God gives no account of these matters.

Religion must have its secrets. It cannot be supposed that a religion which is so intimately connected with the character of the infinite God, whose perfections even angel minds cannot comprehend, on the abyss of which they must ever stand and cry, "O the depth, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" should be without mysteries. Let us be assured of this, if religion was without secrets, it could not be from God. If it was a religion to be measured by our finite minds, it could not be a transcript of the counsels of God; it could not take hold of infinite heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths. That a religion so intimately connected with human spirits, of the nature of which we know so little, and an eternal state of which we know comparatively nothing,—that such a religion has its secrets, is nothing more than what might be expected. In fact, it is a proof of its divi-

nity. If we cannot extort the secrets from nature, with which we are surrounded, which we handle, hear, taste, and see; if we cannot trace the Divine proceedings with respect to man in matters which relate to civil affairs; how is it that any man can dream that there should not be secrets and mysteries in religion, which is concerned with the ever-blessed God, which is concerned with virtue and vice, and connected with that eternal world which is scarcely revealed to us, and the character of which we cannot know? "Am I a God?" said the king of Israel, when the king of Syria sent Naaman to him to be healed of his leprosy. If we cannot attempt to rival acts of Divine power, without presuming to be gods, we surely cannot presume to scan infinite wisdom. Hence what God is, and how he is; his eternity, his omniscience, and omnipresence; how a trinity of persons exist in one nature; how God was made flesh, and dwelt among us; how God was united to man; how the foreknowledge of God can consist with the freedom of human actions; how the freedom of human actions consists with the certainty of the Divine plans; how the dead shall be raised, and with what body they shall come; in what manner spirits exist in a separate state, and what will be our exact condition in another state of things; what will be the events that shall fill the rounds of eternity with pleasure or pain: these are revealed as facts, and are doctrines which we must admit. They stand on the sacred page like stars in the firmament, some of greater and some of smaller magnitude; but they are the great secrets of God. For when any one would proceed to explain them in detail, they fade away from the page, and leave us to say, in the language of the text, "They belong to God."

They belong to him,

1. Because he knows them.

They are his secrets. Of these secrets he is completely the master. It matters not whether we discern the whole truth clearly or not; it is enough that we discover what concerns our salvation, and that the rest, however cloudy to us, burns with brightness in the bosom of God. Proofs are not at all wanting for the foundation of our faith, though we cannot comprehend them. They are absolute facts, if revealed in this book, whether they are taken in by the mental eye, or not; as it is true that there is a goodly world about us, although a blind man cannot discern any objects but what he handles. They are absolute facts, and perfectly consistent with the highest reason.

2. They are his, because they are the reserves he has made in communicating knowledge to man.

To give knowledge is a sovereign act, which God may suspend without injustice. No man has a right to demand of God the degree of knowledge he shall impart. No person could have had any reason to complain, if God had made him a worm of the earth, an insect, instead of giving him a spirit, and by his inspiration giving him understanding. We have no more reason to complain that we do not know more, than the mole has reason to complain because he does not see more, because he does not behold the world about him. We have no more reason to complain because God has not given the knowledge of some secrets, than the heathen, because God has not given the Gospel to them. I say again, to give knowledge is a sovereign act. God has a right to determine in what manner, and where, and to what extent, he will com-

municate knowledge. All we have to do is to say, (thankful for what we have and are,) "Even so, Father; for so it hath seemed good in thy sight."

3. They belong to him in another sense; they are his property.

As they are his secrets, it is an act of great boldness for any man to pry into them. Every man has a property in his own secrets; and it is an act of injustice, a morally wrong act, in another, to endeavour to make himself master of my secrets. There is something of this kind with respect to the ever-blessed God. They belong to him; and man is not allowed to invade his province. Though God allows curiosity, yet he has always punished that prying curiosity which, unmindful of the interdictions of God, has attempted to rob him of his secrets. The man who would attempt to pry into the Divine secrets cannot do it with impunity. The men who looked into the ark were smitten with emerods; and the usual punishment of all those persons who would pry into these things is, "when they look for light behold darkness!" Seeking for more certainty than God has allowed them to have, their religious opinions become unsettled; and they sink first into doubt, and afterward into absolute darkness.

They are his to reveal; and at the proper time that revelation comes. They are taken into the scheme of mercy with respect to his people. They are not absolutely withheld, but only temporally. On every sealed volume God has written, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." Is it too much to wait a little time, in order to prepare us for the full revelation of God, when we shall see face to face? Though the volumes are sealed now, they will be unsealed and unrolled in eternity. The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open the seals of the volume. Page after page, and comment after comment, will be presented to the reverent gaze of the spirit, which, in the light of the Lord, shall be able inwardly to digest all the truths that God shall reveal; and while each solution shall add to their knowledge, they will increase in happiness for ever.

We call your attention,

II. To the "things revealed," which are said to "belong to us."

It appears, then, that there is a revelation of religious truths; that God has granted to man a revelation. It will not be necessary, in such a congregation as this, (composed, I should suppose, for the most part, of believers in Divine revelation,) that I should enter into proofs that this book is indeed a revelation from God. I need only observe, that such a revelation as this was necessary; so necessary, that, without it, man could know nothing of God or of himself. There was no other means of obtaining these truths, which are now in the hands of men, than that of receiving them as a revelation from God. We have heard much of the power of human reason, and its capacity to discover truth; but there is no proof that man, without a revelation from God, would ever have known God at all. There is no proof of this, because we cannot find a man, either savage or civilized, in any part of the world, who actually acquired this knowledge by the mere exercise of his own understanding. Reason has uniformly corrupted and spoiled the truth which God has given; and there needed successive dispensations of truth and grace from God to preserve it in its purity. That which proved so insufficient to preserve it when it was given, scarcely could

have been able to discover it, if it had not been given. God never did leave any creature that he has made, by doubtful inference, to find out his nature and his will; for then there could be no foundation for piety. For the foundation does not stand on opinion, (and all inference is mere opinion,) but upon the revealed will of God. Do not let us mistake, brethren. We cannot sufficiently value the gift we have received in this book; for without it we find there is no proof at all given that man could have discovered God, an immortal spirit in man, or a future state. No man is left to do this. In every age there has been a tradition of God, of the soul, and of a future state. If man had been able to discover the truths necessary to salvation, God, who does nothing in vain, would not have inspired holy men of old, much less have humbled his Son by sending him in the form of a man. We owe all we know to God, of ourselves, and of eternal life, to a direct revelation from God. All religious truths are treasured up in the pages of this book, which has been wonderfully preserved, and transmitted from age to age, while the works of man have perished.

What are the things revealed? A brief view of them will be necessary.

1. Here, then, we have a revelation of God.

Not all the secrets of the Divine nature; but as much of God as it is necessary to know in the present state, for all holy, and happy, and practical consequences. Here mark the peculiar manner in which this book speaks of God. He is not demonstrated in his being and perfections by long and elaborate arguments. There is nothing difficult in the process; but God is revealed, as we might expect him to be revealed, by a revelation from himself: not by painful discovery; not hesitatingly, or doubtfully; but authoritatively. We are not left to pry through the dark texture of the veil, to catch an indistinct view of the object behind it; but revelation undraws the veil with a mighty hand, and discovers all we know of God. We see him

“Full orb’d in his whole round of rays complete.”

2. It is a revelation of man, too.

It may sound strange at first that man should need a revelation to know himself; and yet there is no truth more demonstrable than this, that without a revelation from God there is nothing more mysterious than man himself. Man without this book is to himself the greatest of riddles, and the deepest of enigmas. In contemplating his destiny, without light from heaven, he involves himself in inexplicable labyrinths. If you want proof of this, you find it in the men who have left the light of revelation, and have speculated on what they thought they knew most of,—man himself. What is the result of their speculations? It would be a subject to smile at, if it was not too solemn in its consequences, to see how the men who have left the light of God, and speculated on man, have arrived at directly opposite conclusions. One deprives him of a material nature; another denies him a spirit, and says he is all matter. One raises him to a god; another debases him to a brute. One gives him a high and sovereign reason, capable of controlling himself without foreign assistance; while another makes him the necessary slave of habits and passions. One allows him a probable existence beyond the tomb; while another would invest his last man-

sion with absolute darkness, and write for his epitaph, "Death is an eternal sleep;" while another scarcely allows him a present existence. All these, and various other speculations, might be mentioned, as contained in the works of modern infidels.

We all ought to revere the revelation of God, which has taught us what we ourselves are. It should render this book more dear to us. Here we learn that man was made in the image of God; and that he is a fallen creature. This explains his sorrows and his miseries.—How decidedly is the matter of the compound nature of man settled by the account Moses has given of his original! The Lord made him of the dust of the earth; he was lifeless, till God breathed into him; then he became a living soul. We are fallen creatures. We have sinned against God. Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, we vainly attempt to hew out broken cisterns. We are guilty; under the curse of the law; living a miserable life upon earth; and, if not actually saved, shall perish for ever. We have a deathless soul, and a body which, though it die, shall rise again from the dead, and be as deathless as the spirit.

God has devised means in order to purge the conscience from the guilt of sin, and fit it to enter the paradise of bliss.

3. It is a revelation of Christ.

Here the peculiar character of the Gospel scheme comes forth, in all its glory. There never was a revelation made by God to the world, that was not a revelation of Christ. In fact, both the Old and New Testaments are a revelation of Christ, in different modes. All God's former dispensations represented him, though they represented him darkly; but they became brighter and brighter, as time rolled on.—Because we are guilty creatures; because man has sinned; and because, for reasons laid down in the infinite mind, God could not pardon sin without a suitable satisfaction; "the Word was made flesh." The Son of God became a man, that he might learn in the school of adversity how to sympathize with and to succour the tempted. He had a nature capable of suffering, and did suffer. In that nature he poured out his soul to death, and thus made reconciliation for the transgressors. He ascended into heaven, to testify his power over death. He is seated in heaven, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us. He has established the ministry of his word. He has poured out his Holy Spirit on man, that man might be enlightened and saved.

It is a revelation of the means by which we are interested in this great undertaking. It shows us how the benefits of the death of Christ may descend and rest upon us personally. Here is one peculiar glory of the revelation of Christ. It gives a plain and satisfactory answer to that important question, which nothing else can answer, "What must I do to be saved?" There is no other answer to this question, but that which is contained in the book of God.

The Jew may take this question to his law, and say, under the guilt of his conscience, "What must I do to be saved?" but the oracle of Zion is dumb. The Urim and Thummim make no reply. The law has long been separated from Christ, its end, and therefore is silent.

The pagan may take this question to his idol, and say, under the pressure of his conscience, and its gloom, "What must I do to be saved?" Yet, though he offer the fruit of his body for the sin of his

soul; though he cry aloud to Baal from morning until evening, and inflict upon his body a variety of wounds and pains; yet there is no voice, nor any to answer.

The infidel may, under the pressure of his conscience, take this question (if ever he feels conscience to trouble him) to his Bible of nature, and say to that, "What must I do to be saved?" Nature, as he pretends, speaks aloud through all her works of the goodness of God; and he may suppose this an answer to the question. We grant that nature speaks encouragingly of the goodness of God; but does the Bible of nature speak of nothing else but his goodness? Does it not speak of the power and terrible majesty of God, as well as of his goodness? Are there no threatenings on its pages? Or is it all a book of promise? Has it not storms, as well as sunshine? And has it not desolating tempests, and sweeping pestilences, and famine, which declare the terrible majesty of God, against whom we have sinned? Surely, these might serve to impress him, that the God whom he pretends to worship is something more than a God of mere goodness. Nature, then, gives no satisfactory answer.

Take the question to every sun that shines, and every star that glows in every part of the universal temple of nature, and yet no voice will be returned to this question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Where, then, is the answer to be found? We find it, brethren, recorded in this book; in that expanded scroll which Jesus Christ has held before the face of all ages. We find it in his hands, nailed to the tree. Then the finger of mercy inscribed, "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved; for I am God, and there is none else." It was written in characters of blood, in that hour when Jesus Christ died, and said, "It is finished."

4. It is a revelation of a future state, and of the means to secure final happiness.

Of what importance is the Gospel in this respect! It has brought life and immortality to light. It has dissipated the gloom; it has burst the involving cloud; and all is day. It marks our track through life, that track which is resplendent with the footsteps of the Messiah, who once trod it; trod it in the path of duty, and left that path for the direction of all the saints; the path of holy faith and humble obedience. Through the valley of the shadow of death we are enlightened by the glory which breaks from the skies, showing to every believer the paradise of God.

Is it not encouraging to sinners? It presents to them the fiery throne of judgment, with a dreadful intermediate state, and more dreadful after the sentence is pronounced, "where there is weeping, and gnashing of teeth." O man, God has showed thee what shall be hereafter; the punishment of sin, and his anger against it, that thou mightest be warned in time, and flee to the refuge set before thee.

Tell us how you who are interested in Christ value this revelation. You expect eternal life from his lips. You anticipate beforehand the joy of heaven, which consists in being ever with the Lord, and sharing the glory of Christ for ever.

These things belong to us.

They belong to us, because we have a deep interest in them.

We say of the Gospel, as Moses said of the law, "It is no vain

thing ;” no light and empty thing ; our eternal interest is bound up in it. We might have had a book of philosophy, instead of these pages ; or a book to answer all the questions on the disputed points in theology, which have so long agitated the world. What would have been the advantage ? Mere knowledge puffeth up. There is not a truth God has revealed, but takes deep hold of our present salvation and future state.

They belong to us ; for they are given us that we may study them.

Can it be ? Do not angels weep at this, that man upon earth can have this book of revelation ; and because there is some curious question he cannot solve, he pays no attention to the important subjects it brings before him ? that many who possess this invaluable treasure feel no taste for its contents ? Our language should be, “ O how I love thy law ! I meditate in it day and night.” By knowing, applying, and embracing these truths, we shall secure the happiness at God’s right hand ; or by neglecting them, for the pleasures of this life, we shall be left without the consolations of religion, and the hopes of a better world. As we have a deep interest in them, they are ours.

But they are ours to examine, seriously to examine, that we may know what may be known fully ; and apply ourselves to do all the words of this law.

It is to be feared that many persons, the most curious, as well as the incurious, examine the word of God with little attention. What a sad reflection it is that there are so many of our fellow creatures who so employ themselves in the various concerns of the present life, as to find little leisure to study, examine, and meditate upon the truth which God has given ! How many we find who, with respect to religion, have no more knowledge of it than they learned in their Catechism !

Things practical God has revealed, not to gratify curiosity, but that you may be afraid, and sanctify the Lord God in your hearts ; and let him be your fear and your dread.

The wretchedness of man is revealed, that man may humble himself in dust and ashes, confess his sin, and find mercy.

Christ is revealed, that by every view of his character it may strengthen our personal trust in his merit and saving power.

The method of salvation is revealed, that we may apply to the remedy, and not die and be damned, with salvation within our reach.

Eternity is revealed, that we may be encouraged by its glory, and awed by its terrors ; that we may give up ourselves to God, and lay up for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come.

Let me say, that the blessed revelation God has given us of these important truths never concurs to practical purposes, till, like David, we are so attached to the pages of this book, as to meditate in it day and night ; until we dedicate to it such a portion of our time, as may serve to enlarge our knowledge of the truths it contains.

It is ours to apply.

The great object of God’s revelation is practice. It is an experimental and practical revelation. “ The things revealed belong to us and to our children, that we may do all the words of this law.”

Why has God revealed himself, but that you may be humbled before him ; that you may feel your guilt, wretchedness, and ingratitude ; that you may reverence his majesty, and be encouraged by his mercy in the way Christ has revealed ?

Why is Christ revealed, but that you may come to him with your guilt and weakness, and find through him access to the Father? In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead; and he is designed to supply all the wants of a fallen and guilty human spirit.

Why is man revealed, but that he may be led to God's truth, and read his own character, and come to a proper knowledge of his weakness and dependence upon God?

Why is eternity revealed, but for the purpose of keeping that stupendous object ever before us, that it may lead us to live in reference to a future state? Every action we do has a direct bearing upon our happiness or misery in another state.

It is in this manner that we should apply the truth of God; then the things revealed will, in a high and important sense, become ours.

They belong to children. For children God has deposited them with us; with every person who is a parent especially; and reminded him that the truth is put into his hands, not that he may monopolize it to himself, but transmit it to others, especially to his offspring. "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children."

In the first ages of the world, every head of a family was a minister of religion, and performed all the ordinances of Divine worship. And when the order of ministers was established, the whole of the religious duties of a parent did not cease. It is not possible that God could intend that religious truths should be left entirely to the pulpit. It was ever in the design of God that parents should form in the minds of their children the great elements of religion. They are to train them up, that so they may be led into all truth, and be a generation to serve him.

In the present age of refinement and wisdom, it has been discovered that the Bible is an unfit book for schools. Why is it an unfit book? Because, say the objectors, they cannot understand it. I would say to such persons, Can you understand it? Are there not in it secrets and mysteries which none can understand? That which they understand gradually prepares their minds for the revelation of what is secret. That parent is under an awful responsibility to God who neglects this duty. Piety may not follow of course; but it is the most probable result of a religious training.

What shall I say in conclusion?

1. Such a revelation demands our gratitude.

It is a matter for thankfulness that so much is revealed, and that so intimately connected with our happiness. We ought never to look upon the Bible but with sentiments of sincere gratitude. Though certainly much is hidden, yet what is mysterious in part in this book is found, upon examination, not essentially connected with faith and hope. What is revealed is of more importance than any thing to be revealed. I do not undervalue any of the things God has to reveal: they will fill the souls of the saints with wonder, and raise into activity every power of the glorified nature. If it had been good for us to have known them here, we should have known them all. The great attainments of the Christian character may be made without such discoveries. God has withheld the less, and given the greater. Why do we not apply our hearts to this system, when there are so many fields of knowledge in which the sun shines with unobstructed beams? Be-

cause in some distant region there is darkness, shall we run into that darkness, and then complain for want of light? Let us be thankful that we have a perfect revelation; that we are not in the state of the patriarchs and Jews, to be taught by studying pictures, the mere elements of knowledge. God has now brought us into the school of Christ, where all the system, so far as it relates to the present state, is clearly unfolded. Let us be thankful next to the Bible, that we have so many helps to understand it, so many judicious comments. Let me add,

2. Our responsibility is in proportion to our privilege.

If with these advantages we are walking in the paths of sin and folly, how shall we answer to God, who shall finally sit in judgment upon us? It will be our greatest bane, or our highest bliss, that we have possessed a Bible.

If we are thus favoured with the light, we are called to "walk as children of the light;" to "put off the former conversation, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Even the holiness of former dispensations was far below the light of Christianity. We are called to follow the example, not of this patriarch, and that prophet, but to mark the resplendent footsteps of the Messiah. We are called to put on Christ, and to let the same mind be in us that was in him.

If our minds aspire after the discovery of some important truth, provided the curiosity be holy, the desire is not forbidden. Moses, when he offered this petition, "O Lord, I beseech thee show me thy glory," was not reproved.

Much is learned by habitual walking with God. Piety is the key to many mysteries which science cannot possibly unlock; and ere long, as I before observed, what God has reserved shall be communicated. For though at present "we see as through a glass darkly," the time is coming when we shall see face to face. The shades of evening are passing away; the day of eternity is coming, when a full and clear light will shine on the pages of this book; when all the doctrines, one after another, will start into perfect clearness.

God grant that we may make a right use of things revealed, and at last enter the realms of light, where God shall perfectly unveil himself, and be seen eye to eye, and face to face, by his saints! Amen.

SERMON LXI.—*The Frailty of Man, and the Immutability of the Gospel.*

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever," 1 Peter i, 24, 25.

THESE words are a quotation from the fortieth chapter of the book of the Prophet Isaiah; a reference to which will enable us more fully to enter into their import. The prophet proclaims comfort to Israel: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accom-

plished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

The approach of the Messiah is then announced; and his herald, John the Baptist, is introduced by the prophet, as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Then Messiah himself bursts upon the view in his august character, as Jehovah, the God of the Jewish Church. "Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God."

The effect of his administration is next described, in abasing the hills, and exalting the valleys, till all flesh together should see the glory of God. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Views like these might well shake faith in its strongest form. The pious Jew might say, "How can these things be? Lord, I believe, I dare not question; but can these things be? Help mine unbelief." It was helped. "The voice said, Cry! And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass." But this word of promise is not the word of flesh, that is, the word of man. This glorious plan is not of human devising, and therefore partakes not of human infirmity. It is "the word of our God, and shall stand for ever."

On this ground St. Peter founds his firm confidence that the Gospel could never fail; but that it "liveth and abideth for ever." Addressing the believers of his day, he says, "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." And this "word of the Lord," spoken by the prophet, "is the Gospel" which is "preached unto you." It declares God's purpose, and method of saving the world. Opposed it may be; but all opposition is vain. It standeth fast for ever.

The subjects then to which I shall call your attention are, the perpetuity of the Gospel, and various practical applications of this truth to our comfort and direction.

I. The perpetuity of the Gospel: "The word of the Lord endureth for ever."

This is to us a subject of so much importance, that I shall adduce several of those considerations which confirm it to us beyond all doubt or suspicion, that the word of the Lord, as embodied in the holy Gospel, "abideth for ever."

1. The first principle on which this all-important conclusion rests is the truth of the Gospel.

Truth is everlasting. It must be so in its own nature; for that which is true remains so for ever. If, therefore, we have evidence of

the truth of the Gospel, we have evidence of its everlasting character. It cannot change with opinions, the fallacy and falsehood of which some new discovery, some deeper reach of thought, detects and exposes. It is founded in the reality of things, and in the stable counsels of an immutable God; and is therefore eminently "the truth," and leaves nothing to be discovered that can alter its character. This is the first ground of assurance. Errors are nothing. They are deceptions as to the reality of things, and must all, therefore, pass away. They are the clouds of the mind, which, however various, and even attractive, their combinations and form, and though they should be gilded by chance rays of truth, turned out of their course, and reflected from their surface, yet change while we gaze upon them, and shall be swept away by the wind of heaven. But truth is the steady light of day. Its illuminations emanate from the central sun, ever flowing, unexhausted, and inexhaustible.

2. The second principle on which the everlasting duration of the Gospel rests, is, that it is not only truth, but truth which is the subject of experimental proof.

All truth is eternal; but all truth does not come within the compass of human observation, and cannot therefore be put to the test; nor can we get at the proof that it is so. It may be true that the stars are habitable worlds, and that there, life, vegetable, animal, and rational, is poured forth in the riches of profuse goodness; and that countless myriads are there rejoicing in the dispensed bounties of our common Father. But we have no proof of this. None of us have ascended those heavens; and none of their inhabitants, supposing them to exist, have descended to us. We reason and conclude from real or supposed analogies.

But the truth of the Gospel is not of this distant nature. It is not foreign from human condition; and is not beyond human proof. In fact, it can only be attributed to its having answered in all cases the proof, the trial of human experience, that it has been preserved in the world; and by its answering that proof it will be transmitted with new attestations to the latest ages. If men had sought satisfactory and convincing information from it in vain; if pardon, in vain; if the healing of diseased souls, in vain; if comfort in trouble, in vain; long since had it ranked among idle theories, and been regarded as a monument—a stupendous monument, it is true, but still a mere monument—of inventive genius. But has it been so? Our Lord, as it were, stakes the truth of his teaching upon this issue: "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." His doctrine abides this issue. Which of you has asked without receiving? sought, without finding? run to shelter, alarmed and trembling at the danger, without finding a secure and quiet refuge? I ask you whether you do not set to your seal that God is true? Ah! I hear many respond to this question. One says, "He hath led me by a way that I knew not;" another, "I was brought low, and he helped me;" another, "I was as a sheep going astray," but he reclaimed me from my wanderings, and I am now returned to the "Shepherd and Bishop of my soul." All who truly believe declare unitedly, "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins."

It is this that makes the Gospel everlasting. It comes into daily experience. Youth, mature age, and hoary hairs, are all daily putting it to the proof. It is transmitted by one generation to another; it is commended from the lips of declining years, and from dying couches, to the people that shall come hereafter; and they rise up, and praise the Lord for his mercies, and for this the most wondrous of his mercies to the children of men.

3. A third principle on which the perpetuity of the Gospel rests, is, that it is bound up essentially with the moral condition of man. It can, therefore, never become obsolete, because never inapplicable.—The Gospel is to be considered under two views in its relation to man: as remedial; and as glorifying.

The first supposes a fall, a disease, a state of misery and danger. As long, therefore, as man is fallen, diseased, guilty, helpless, and miserable, the remedy is necessary, and can never become useless. And where is it that man is not this fallen, this diseased, this wretched being? The world is now open; every country, and every clime is visited, or reported of. But there is no race of happy beings, none who have obtained help and healing independent of the Gospel. It is applicable every where.

And is there any probability that men will ever come into the world in a different condition? Ages have rolled away, and man is what he was. As long, therefore, as man is born into the world with sinful propensities and guilty passions, he will need the salvation which the Gospel only reveals. To the end of time the Gospel will be as necessary as it is now; and it will go on with our race to the end.—Man will ever need mercy; and the mercy of God, holding out pardon, healing, and salvation, he will extend to the last man that shall be born of woman. Thus to the end of time it can never become obsolete; never wax old.

But it is also a glorifying dispensation.

This is a wonderful world; and I use it because it is in the new covenant. For if it had not been there, who could have lifted his thoughts so high, and attempted even to grasp the mighty, the ever-eluding thought, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified?” This is peculiar to the Gospel. “This do, and thou shalt live.” The law has no higher promise than this. But faith has. The Gospel not only provides life, not only a remedy, not only restitution to what sin forfeited; but glory; the glory of immortality: but not that alone; it reveals immortality under peculiar circumstances: immortality with God, with Christ, in changeless, ever-increasing bliss, and moral and intellectual advancement.

This carries on the Gospel through time into eternity; and shows us how, in the extended use of that term, “the word of the Lord endureth for ever.” How narrow are those views which have restrained the operation of the Gospel to the present state, and as though the general judgment, at the farthest, were to put an end to the new dispensation! It is true, Christ will then “deliver up the kingdom to God even the Father, and God shall be all in all.” But how is it that God will be all in all? Whatever that deep and unfathomable declaration may import; it is because Christ died, that God will be all in all to redeemed man. The title by which he holds that bliss is the

death of Christ ; and the source of those rivers of pleasure which shall roll on for ever was opened on the cross. "And he showed me," says the beloved disciple, caught up into the visions of God, "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the midst of the throne of God and of the Lamb," Rev. xxii, 1. "There appeared in the midst of the throne as it were a Lamb newly slain." His death has an everlasting freshness of merit and of power. The river of life, clear as crystal, denotes unmixed joy and purity. It flows from under the throne of God and the Lamb. Hear the song of the blessed. Does that intimate that the dispensation is come to its close? "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive glory, and honour, and wisdom, and blessing." No ; every thing there will for ever remind us of Christ. The body which Christ will eternally exhibit ; our own bodies, raised from dust to glory ; our souls, opening vast and unknown powers to the communicated truth and vast designs of God ; our company, come, like us, out of tribulation and conflict ; our remembered sins, remembered to heighten the compassion which redeemed us out of all evil ; the very character of our love, love to a Deliverer ; the character of our bliss, repose after tumult, safe land after the storm, Canaan after the howling wilderness ; our peculiar union with God, an access to whom nothing could have opened but that which made God ineffably all in all to man,—the sacrificial blood of Christ : these things will eternally present to the minds of the glorified hosts of heaven the mediatorial scheme revealed in the Gospel. "Because I live," says our Saviour, "ye shall live also."

4. A fourth principle is, that the Gospel is the plan of God for saving the world.

This establishes its perpetuity. The plan must be realized, the purpose of God accomplished. Let us hear how the apostle reasons upon this subject : "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the Gospel : whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ : to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," Eph. iii, 4–11. The apostle calls this a "mystery ;" a "mystery hid in God," till the publication of the Gospel ; "an eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." And what is this "mystery," this "purpose?" It is, that "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel ;" that "all men might see the fellowship of the mystery ;" that is, that they might partake of its benefits. This plan is not yet accomplished. The Gospel, then, must continue, in every thing which relates to the present state,

till all men "see the fellowship of the mystery;" till all the Gentiles have the offer of the blessing.

The plan is laid, and the building must rise to answer it. It is true that the workmen have been sometimes negligent; the enemy has thrown down the work; and in the best of times hitherto the sword and the trowel have been seen on the walls. But fear not. "The God of heaven he will prosper us: therefore we his servants will arise and build." And let Sanballat and Tobiah mock, the city of God shall rise, and his temple be consecrated. The kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it; and the Lord God and the Lamb shall be the glory of it for ever and ever. Let them mock on. The Lord our God is with us, and the shout of a King is in our camp.

Having shown you the immovable principles on which the perpetuity of the Gospel rests, let us,

II. Consider the application of this great truth to our comfort and direction.

To the practical uses of the subject we are directed by the very phrase of our text, as beautiful and just as it is moving and mournful. "All flesh is as grass:" not the strong and enduring tree of the forest; not even the shrub, but grass,—a word for the frailer vegetable tribes, the annual product of the field and the garden, which flourish and die within the compass of a single season.

"All the glory of man," all that decorates and adorns his life, all that is beauty to the eye, or gives pleasure to the imagination, is still more frail; it endures not the life of the short-lived plant which arrays itself in its beauty. "The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth."

And this is not exaggeration. It is truth so obvious that every heart feels it, but that of fondly hoping and inexperienced youth. Behold the glory of the physical nature of man; and make haste to behold it, or it will escape you. Youth, beauty, strength, the flow of feeling, and the rush of energy; the wind of sickness, or care, or age, passes over them, and they are gone. Behold those circumstances and engagements which men plan for their pleasure and glory. A frost shall lay the flower in the dust; or a blight leave its withered remains to shiver on the stem.

Mark the flowers which remind us most of the bloom of Eden, and which shed the most healthy fragrance on our path through life: the happy social hearth; the friendships founded on virtue; the hallowed domestic relations; the fellowship, the communion of saints. Separations and death change the scene; strangeness and solitude succeed; the places of many know them no more; and you mark the deserted place, and sigh that the occupant is gone.

Mark the furrowed turf around you. It is heaved above its natural surface; and it covers the generations of short-lived men. Like the herbage of the season, life and death have trodden in each other's footsteps; and the career of each still goes on. Death is at the heels of life, cutting down its pleasant plains, and sternly trampling into the dust its constant but vain creations. "All flesh is grass."

Mark the glory of man's intellectual nature. Systems are formed, and opinions are advanced, without reference to this everlasting word, or in opposition to it; but these products of an immortal mind are

mortal. They are imbued with its frailty. They dazzle or astonish us for the moment, and are forgotten.

Mark the glory of collective man. United, he puts on the appearance of strength. He founds empires; he builds cities; he guards by his armies; he cements by his policy. Ah! vain attempt! Still "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." Trace the track of civilized and powerful man through the world, and you will find it covered with the wreck of his hopes; and the very monuments of his power have been converted into the mockery of his weakness. His eternal cities moulder in their ruins; the serpent hisses in the cabinet where he planned his empire. Echo itself is startled by the foot which breaks the silence that has reigned for ages in his hall of feast and song. Columns stand in the untrodden desert; and the hut of the shepherd, or the den of the robber, shelters the only residents of his palaces. And the glory which now exists is crumbling every where, when it has not the cement of Christianity, and where it takes not something of perpetuity from the everlasting word. All heathen glory, and all Mohammedan pride, creak in the blast, and nod to their fall. The withering wind or the raging tempest shall pass over them in turn; and men shall sit upon the ruins of their proudest grandeur, and by them shall be reminded that "all flesh is grass, and the goodliness of it as the flower of the field."

But turn from these scenes. Though all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the fading flower; yet all is not grass.

Though the world moves, every thing does not move with it. No, not every thing within the reach of man; not every thing in which man has, or may have, a possession; for "the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

1. Its mercy changes not.

It turns the aspect of kindness upon you at all times, and in all changes. It has pity for your weakness, pardon for your sins, strength for your trials, direction for your difficulties, comfort for your sorrows. Change as the world and your circumstances may, this word never changes. In all the states of trouble and distress it sympathizes with us, and brings its aid. Are you troubled on account of sin? Believe its promise of forgiveness. Are you pressed with outward sorrows? Hear the promise: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify me." Is there a thorn in your flesh? That word declares that the grace of your Saviour is "sufficient for you." In every case it has a promise of cheering and inspiring comfort.

2. The fulness of its supplies of spiritual blessings changes not.

There is no dearth here. This covenant is ordered in all things, and sure; and its gracious provisions meet every want through the whole of our mortal and immortal being.

3. And death, while it strips of every thing else, has no power here.

The word of God remains when strength, and health, and friends are gone. Its light, its hope, its inspiring courage remain, till we are ushered into the blissful presence of our God and Saviour.

SERMON LXII.—*Paradise Shut, Guarded, and Re-opened.*

“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life,” Genesis iii, 24.

INTO the garden of Eden, that sacred enclosure, the great destroyer of mankind entered. He introduced into it the curse of sin, and in a moment the whole scene was changed. “Sin entered,” says the apostle, “and death by sin.” The vegetable beauty of Eden, and the inhabitants who dwelt in it, were given over to death. Man himself sunk into a dying life. The spirit became subject to the curse of alienation from God. Then was opened that fountain, the tide of whose miseries was soon hurried over all the earth. In that moment death commenced his career; and ever since he has been feeding the grave insatiably with the bodies, and a yawning hell with the souls, of the race of Adam. We cannot be surprised that the first culprits were marked out for punishment; and we have an affecting display of the Divine rod. Death itself was not inflicted immediately; but the dreadful sentence was passed by the offended Judge: “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” And they were expelled from Eden to ruminate over their sin and folly, and to feel their wretchedness. “So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

This is the affecting view which the text gives us of the state of the first human pair. They were excluded from the abode of their former innocence and pleasure; frightened at the presence of the Cherubim and the flaming sword; bending under the load of their guilt; doomed to labour and sorrow, till they should sink into the dust, from whence they came.

Our attention is directed by the text to two particulars; and there is another which it is our blessedness to connect with them, not immediately suggested by the text, but by other parts of sacred Scripture.

I. I will call your attention to paradise shut.

II. To paradise guarded.

III. To paradise re-opened.

I. I will call your attention to the expulsion of man from paradise. “He drove out the man; and he placed at the east gate,”—and the only gate it had was on the east side,—he placed “Cherubims,” angelic powers, “and a flaming sword,” or more literally, a round flame of a sword; ever flaming with pointed flames resembling a fiery sword, and turning every way to prevent every kind of access, and the possibility or hope of re-entering the garden, and of finding their way to the tree of life.

We are struck with the fact, more than with the history. The garden of Eden was a solemn and impressive type. Eden partook of the common curse, which was inflicted on all the earth. It was permitted for a time to remain in fading beauty; and there continued at the gate these Cherubim and flaming swords; these flamings of the dreadful effects of sin; showing the impossibility of regaining, by any human

power, what Adam had lost. Considering it in this light, the flaming Cherubim before the gate are designed to represent what man lost, and the impossibility of regaining it, and also our dreadful participation in the loss of our first parents.

Let us, then, inquire what man is shut out of, when he is shut out of paradise. What did he lose?

1. He lost the happiness of his external condition.

In paradise all was happiness. There was no pain, no want, no sorrow, no tear, no death. When driven out, he was driven into the wilderness of woe, to gain his bread by the sweat of his brow; to linger out a few years in disappointment, pain, and misery, and then to die. This is the condition of man. Little external happiness surrounds him in the present life. What he has, he derives from the superabundant grace of Christ; for every particle of it was forfeited by sin. Man is now doomed to toil, frequent sorrows, tears, and finally to death.

2. When man was excluded from paradise, he lost, too, the uprightness and purity of his moral nature.

This loss infinitely exceeded in wretchedness the loss of his external condition. "God made man upright." This expression intimates that there was in his nature a tendency to good; that good was his element. The understanding aspired after it; the will clave to it; the affections rejoiced in it. In him all was order, and all was peace. The moment that sin infected the moral nature of man, it spread through the whole character. The understanding became darkened; the will rebellious; the affections were vitiated; in a word, he became a sinner. "The whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint." We have shared in this loss. The nature of man is corrupt; and the corruption extends to every descendant of Adam. The fact proves this. It is proved by the experience of every man, and of every child. We go astray from the womb. Does any person require Scripture proof? Two passages, I think, will be sufficient. "That," said Jesus, in his discourse with Nicodemus, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This expression,— "that which is born of the flesh,"—signifies, that what is born of man is sinful. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Such, then, is our infected nature, tending continually to evil. There is in us "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."—Without an entire and radical conversion, no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven. His upright, moral nature man lost when paradise was lost.

3. Man then lost his approving conscience.

He must have had that in his primitive state. Without that all the delights of Eden could not have made him happy. It is that which gives and sustains the happiness of angels. It is something analogous to that in which the happiness of the infinitely blessed God consists; a consciousness of the infinite purity of his nature; the rectitude of all his actions. The mind at one with itself, the heart serene and tranquil, the enjoyment of inward self satisfaction; all this was lost when sin was felt.

In this loss we have all shared in consequence of our connection with our corrupt head and representative. We are transgressors.

Every man, more or less, feels the pain of an accusing conscience, and carries about with him the inward reproofs of his own mind, which cast a gloom over the brightest condition in which on earth he can be placed.

4. When paradise was lost, intercourse with God was lost.

There must have been, between man in a state of innocence, and the ever-blessed God, habitual intercourse. There must have been in his spirit the continual sense, the exulting sense, of the Divine presence. Beside this, certain it is, that every act of devotion would carry the first pair into closer and more intimate intercourse with God. It is highly probable that God condescended so far as by a sensible manifestation of himself on the morning and evening of each day, to receive their personal worship, and hold intercourse with them. We have an intimation that he walked in the garden, calling on Adam, who knew his voice. How would the whole of this time, when God was visible to man, and when they were permitted to have intercourse with him, and to acknowledge him as their Friend, rest on their memories!

But see the difference when man became a sinner. The thought of God then became oppressive. The fallen pair heard the voice of God, and hid themselves. In this sad loss we have participated. It is a solemn and serious fact, that in the heart of sinful man there is no love to God. In all his thoughts there is an aversion to God. The very remembrance of God is irksome and oppressive to him. Prayer is a burden; religious ordinances are a weariness; and so is every thing in which God is seen and enjoyed. There is no inclination in man's corrupt heart to seek him. Every sinful man is without God, and therefore without hope.

5. The last circumstance I shall mention is, that he was prevented all access to the tree of life: "He placed Cherubim, and a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life."

There are two opinions with respect to the tree of life. We shall not attempt to decide between them. Both may be just. One opinion is, that the tree of life was a tree which God had endowed with potent medicinal and healing virtues; by occasionally eating the fruit of which the body of Adam was preserved in an undiseased and undecaying state. When he offended, it was therefore a necessary consequence that he should be debarred from a tree of this kind, inasmuch as sentence of death was passed upon him.

The other opinion is,—and we shall see it is not irreconcilable with Scripture,—that the tree of life was a kind of sacrament. As the promise of immortality was given to Adam, every time he ate of this tree by God's appointment, he expressed his faith in God's promise; and God, as often as he ate of it, sealed the promise of immortality to man. In this view sin excluded man from the tree of life, as he lost his title to immortality.

In this loss, too, we have participated. We are without the tree of life. We cannot have access to that which prevented the approach of death. The way to it is closed. On the ground of the covenant of works, what man can expect eternal life, immortal blessedness, after this present scene of things? Both with respect to the body and the mind all approach to the tree of life is denied.

Such is the loss which Adam sustained, and in which his descendants have participated with him.

As we have contemplated the shutting of paradise, I will call your attention,

II. To paradise guarded. "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

What could be intended by a dispensation of this kind, but an intimation, not only that man had lost all by sin; but also the impossibility, by his own efforts, of regaining that condition which he had lost? What man dare approach this flame? What man dare expose himself to the point of the burning fiery sword? Its dreadful aspect kept the first pair at an awful distance from the scene of so much terror; from that which displayed so much of the majesty and the anger of God.

The subject is not unprofitable to us in the present day. Paradise is guarded, as to you, by all the awful, all the terrible perfections of God; so that, except by the dispensation which I shall have occasion to mention, if man is left to himself, it is impossible for him, in any instance, to regain the favour of God. As for Adam, the verse says, there were flaming swords, and bands of flaming Cherubim, to prevent his entering that state of blessedness from which he was driven. From the contemplation of God's perfections, revealed under aspects so terrific, no sinner can find the least hope of regaining the Divine favour. Not from any single perfection of the Divine character, or from all his perfections together, can the transgressor derive the least hope of pardon, purity, or happiness.

Do you expect forgiveness of sins and a restoration to the Divine favour from the majesty of God? Is it not easy to conceive that in proportion as God's majesty is manifested to man, man's condition as a sinner becomes more hopeless? When we offend against the Majesty of heaven, in proportion as we do so, doubtless there is less hope of forgiveness. What hope can a creature have, who derives his existence from almighty God, sets himself in opposition to the will of his Maker, dares to despise his power, trample under foot his authority, and violate those laws which are holy and just and good? The majesty of God is one of those flames placed at the east gate of Eden, and which guards, by its terrible burnings, the way to the tree of life.

Can we derive any expectation or hope from the holiness of God? Can we make this plea, that because God is holy, we, as sinners, may expect deliverance? If God be infinitely pure, so pure as to charge his angels with folly, and we are told the heavens are not pure in his sight; then his purity must be expressed by his aversion to sin; his irreconcilable aversion to that which is opposed to an essential quality of his nature. Then he must also express his aversion to sinners who are infected by it. Contemplated as sinners, or in a state of evil, we must be abhorred by the purity of almighty God; for "God is angry with the wicked every day." The clearer the discoveries are of the Divine holiness, the more it appals us in our condition as depraved and guilty.

Should we derive any hope from the truth of God? What is truth? His truth is particularly manifested, by the observation of his word.

In that observation we see the fulfilment of threatenings as well as of promises. It would be a great impeachment of the truth of God, not to fulfil his solemn threatenings as well as his covenant of promise. Let every one who expects that the denunciation of Divine vengeance will fall to the ground hear the words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my word shall not pass away." There will be as exact an accomplishment of the Divine threatenings, as of God's covenant engagements. "The strength of Israel is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent." Then the truth of God is one of those flames of fire which wave every way to forbid, by their frightful aspect, any hope of access to the forfeited paradise, and its tree of life.

Can we derive any hope from the justice of God? What is justice? It is the giving to every man according as his work shall be. Can we have hope, as sinners, on such ground as this? Can we feel any hope from the consideration, that we shall be rewarded according to our works? Justice consists in that, and nothing else. Glory, honour, and peace, are promised to every man that doeth good; tribulation, and anguish are denounced against every man that doeth evil; and God's justice will execute the threatened penalty. We may collect this from the frequent allusion in Holy Scripture to the process of being weighed. God has said he will search the heart, and try the reins, and ponder and weigh the path of man. Are all weighed? Then what is good God will reward exactly; and what is evil shall be punished exactly. Hence, the writing on the wall was, "Tekel: thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting." Hope from justice, then, there is none. That is another of the flaming swords which keep the way to the tree of life.

You say there is goodness. May we not hope on the ground that God is good? God is good; and yet it is my duty to say that, considered merely as a sinner, separate from every other consideration, there is no hope from the Divine goodness for the forgiveness of man, and his restoration to holiness. We are to recollect, in considering goodness as another character of God, that he is perfectly good. The perfection of an infinite Being is absolute; so that one perfection is not injurious to the rest, but they all operate in perfect harmony. In consequence of this, the goodness of God can never be indulged at the expense of his justice and purity. If this were done, our God would cease to be a perfect being. To illustrate this: a judge condemns a criminal. If he is much given to compassion, he may pity the criminal at the bar; he may shed tears when he passes sentence; but the sentence is demanded by the law. The king is the fountain of mercy, apt to feel compassion; yet the honour of his government, and the good of society, require the infliction of the sentence. So it is with respect to God himself, and his moral government of the world. There is no hope for the sinner from the goodness of God. According to the original covenant, happiness was secured to man while he retained his allegiance; but there is no hope to sinful and rebellious man from any of these attributes of God.

But you say, "Is there not mercy in the Divine Being?" Mercy signifies pity for the miserable, and pardon for the guilty. There is mercy in the Divine nature; but what then? We are wrong if we

suppose that mercy is a distinct attribute of God ; it is not so, but a modification of goodness. It is one mode in which goodness operates. Therefore, whatever restricts the operation of goodness, restricts the operation of mercy. Man, when expelled from paradise, could have no idea of mercy.

It is contended we may be pardoned on the ground of prerogative. On the ground of prerogative God Almighty never has exercised mercy to guilty man ; on other grounds he has ; but on the ground of prerogative no hope can rest.

Here, then, we find paradise guarded ; guarded by all those awful perfections of God of which the awful flame and the Cherubim were but faint emblems : dooming man first to misery, and then to despair ; to despair, as far as he himself, and the perfections of God, are separately considered.

I pass cheerfully to the last part of our subject.

III. Paradise re-opened.

The Redeemer appears, removing these guards, and throwing open the gate of heaven to the tree of life itself.

That paradise has been opened is evident from a great number of passages of Scripture. When Jesus hung upon the cross, he said to a thief,—to a man of vile moral character,—to a sinner of no common malignity, but a penitent,—“This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Paradise then was opened. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, tells us he was caught up into paradise, and heard unutterable things ; things which fell so sweetly upon his ears, that afterward he longed to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. In a passage of the Revelation of St. John, we find these expressions : “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right unto the tree of life.” Paradise is opened, then. If not the earthly paradise, yet all that constituted it. Paradise is the pardon of sin ; peace of conscience ; a restoration to the image of God. These give a right to the tree of life, which flourishes with unfading beauty in the heaven of God.

How did this great event take place ? How were these guards removed ? How were these flaming swords quenched ? The way was this. Jesus, the Son of God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us ; he took upon him the character and office of the second Adam. One was the destroyer, the other the Restorer. The one sinned, and brought death on his posterity ; the other was righteous, and suffered the penalty of sin, and gave his life for his spiritual posterity. In other words, Jesus Christ took upon him our nature ; in our behalf approached the flaming Cherubim ; and by his might removed every hinderance out of the way, and opened a passage into the paradise of God. He submitted to die as a sin offering, and quenched every flaming sword in his own blood.

The more clearly we conceive of this wondrous method of salvation, the better established will be our faith, and the higher our admiration will rise. There is not a perfection in the Divine character, the vengeance of which was not suffered by the Son of God ; and the glory of the Divine attributes is as much displayed by the death of Christ as they could have been by the personal condemnation of the human race. So that, by this wondrous plan, a door of hope is opened, and a

promise of salvation and eternal life is given; and yet every perfection of God remains unspotted.

For instance: do we see the holiness of God, one of those flames of fire glaring fearfully on the mind of the guilty sinner? The death of Christ illustrated that holiness. It is certain that God has never forgiven a sinner but through the death of his only-begotten Son. That death displayed so great a hatred of sin, that the holiness of God was illustrated by it.

Do we speak of Divine truth? All the truth of God was answered by the death of Christ. The sentence was death, bodily and mental; and both were suffered by Jesus Christ. The dignity of his nature gave value and virtue to his suffering, fully adequate to the salvation of the millions of the human race. One word of God did not fall to the ground. You recollect, when looking at the infirmity of the human nature in Christ, he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," an angel was sent from heaven. For what purpose? to mitigate his punishment? No; truth demanded the full punishment, and so did justice. It was not to mitigate the punishment; but the angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him to undergo the whole of it. Had it not been for that, probably his own nature had died in the agony in the garden. The whole of the sentence must be endured, and the man supernaturally strengthened, that the justice of God might be honoured; that He who said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," might carry the cross, and say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These perfections being thus honoured, goodness and mercy are allowed to come into operation. This great Substitute of ours, this second Adam, went to the gate, and collected all these flames, and, by the shedding of his own blood, found a method of reconciling them to the mild and encouraging glories of the Divine nature. He turned them into the complexion of mercy; and now from the grave of the dead Saviour arises that sacred, that invigorating, that cheering light which shines upon the way to the throne of grace here, and the paradise of God hereafter.

In consequence of this, much of paradise is restored on earth; such as a peaceful conscience, arising from the pardon of sin, restoring us to the favour of God, and blessed intercourse with him. His image is traced again on the renewed spirit, which is to be sanctified through all its powers.

Go and claim paradise then. Go up to the gate and take the name of Jesus. By virtue of his blood you will find the door opened, and a safe way opened to the heavenly grace. With penitence confess your sins, that you may receive the communications of the Divine love.

There is a tree of paradise above. The gate of death, as to every believer, is the gate of this paradise. When we approach it, no flaming Cherubim guard it. When we go through the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil. The disembodied spirit, passing through the gate, enters the paradise where Jesus Christ himself is; where he himself is the tree of life; where he took the body, restored to immortality, and will keep it immortal for ever. There the external condition of the saints is much higher than was the external condition of the first pair. "For I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men."

This, then, is that paradise which God, by the gift of his Son Jesus Christ, by his wondrous love, has opened to us in this life, and in the life to come. And this is to be added to it : it is to be a deathless one. Behold, they that do his commandments have right to the tree of life ; they have an eternal charter to it. “Where sin abounded grace doth much more abound.”

I will close the subject simply, and in few words, by putting you in possession of those means by which you can personally avail yourselves of the advantages Christ has purchased, and acquire a personal right to the paradise of grace on earth, and glory in heaven.

A few words will suffice. There are conditions. I do not mean to use that word controversially, but I use it in a sense in which persons of every sound theological creed will concur. The first condition is deep penitence. And is it not right that we who have sinned against so much majesty and mercy,—we whose obdurate hearts never flowed with love, even at the tidings of what the Saviour did for us, when he endured the flames of the Divine displeasure, and offered himself a sacrifice in our stead,—Is it not right that we should repent in the deepest sorrow and humiliation ? If you will not confess and forsake your sins, you must endure the bitter consequences of them for ever. If the first thing required of you is refused, by your own obstinacy, then, though paradise is opened to the believer, it is shut to you.

There must be an express act of faith in Jesus Christ ; a believing acceptance of his blessed sacrifice ; an acceptance of God’s mercy, displayed to you by the death of his Son. For the sake of that death you are to be accepted of God, to the exclusion of all human merit and boasting.

There must be more. There must be a living by faith on the Son of God ; a conversion of heart by the influence of the Divine Spirit ; or it will be impossible finally to enter into paradise, and partake of the tree of life. Repentance, faith, humble, persevering holiness, are required of all of you. On the one hand, if you have not believed, and entered in, you are still in the wilderness of woe, under the curse of God, doomed to the short-lived pleasures of this world, and afterward to the regions of damnation for ever. See the sentence still hanging over you : “Dust thou art.” See a more dreadful sentence still, the sentence of eternal banishment from God. This is the condition of those who obey not the Gospel of Christ. Turn and look on Him whom you have pierced, and mourn because of him. Come, in humble desire, to the throne of the heavenly grace. Come, and claim the blessings so dearly purchased.

To you who have regained the way of God, though you are still liable to the death of the body,—to disease, and sorrow, and pain,—I would say, Recollect Him of whom the apostle speaks : “Christ, though a Son, learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” Though sons, you are called to learn discipline by the things that you suffer. Keep the heavenly prize in view. For that day prepare, that you may enter in by the blood of the Lamb ; sit under the shadow of the tree of life ; eat of it, and enjoy the fruits of it for ever.

God grant you this grace. Amen.

SERMON LXIII.—*Abuse of the Long Suffering of God.*

“These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes,” Psalm 1, 21.

THIS psalm is in proof that the doctrine of a future state was known to the ancient Jews. It was written either by Asaph, or for Asaph, as master of the choral service; and, therefore, at the time when the Jewish dispensation was existing in its most perfect form.

But even then there were “Israelites after the flesh,” as well as “after the Spirit;” observers of sacrifices and ceremonies, but violators of moral precepts; and yet, depending upon their external piety for exemption from the punishment of moral offences.

The solemnities of the future judgment are therefore exhibited to arouse them, and bring them to repentance; and at the bar of the majesty of God all their religious delusions are dissipated.

One of these delusions is marked in the text. The delay of the punishment of sin was made an argument for remaining in it; nay, more, the long suffering of God was pleaded against the revealed representations of his justice, until the fatal conclusion was arrived at, that God was like themselves.

This fatal error was not peculiar to that age. Solomon lays it down as a general observation, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” And wherever man will indulge in sin, the same effect, more or less, follows. It is a delusion of corrupt human nature, wherever that nature is found; and it becomes our duty to guard you against it, or to rescue you from it.

Let us then consider,

I. How the long suffering or “silence” of God ought to be interpreted.

II. The corrupt perversion of this affecting doctrine by sinful men; “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”

III. The fatal results at the last day.

I. The perversion of the patience and silence of God as to punishment, to purposes of religious sloth, formality or corruption, is one of the most unnatural acts we can conceive; and it supposes an ignorance and an ingratitude equally criminal.

This will appear if we consider the principles on which it has pleased God himself to place this kind and gracious branch of his administration.

1. The appointment of a state of moral exercise and probation.

In this state we have to acquire a knowledge of the will of God, to struggle with temptation, and to attain the important habit of faith,—an implicit trust in God’s word. To all these things sudden punishment would be contrary; probation would be terminated at once, as soon as it was begun; and we should “walk by sight,” and not “by faith.” Before the antediluvian world was destroyed by the flood, before the plagues of Egypt were inflicted, before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies, and in all similar visitations of Divine Provi-

dence, "the long suffering of God waited" for the penitence of the people; and the threatened vengeance was delayed till their iniquities were full.

2. Another principle appears to be, that we may see the evil of sin in itself, as well as in its penal results.

This it is important for man to know. God will not an obedience from fear only, but from conviction; and every thing we observe with care may instruct us in this, that sin is folly and misery. Fix, for example, upon any evil passion or act. Nay, take the most prosperous sinners. Is their case such as you can seriously envy? Ask yourselves what fruit you had in those things of which you are now ashamed. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." But all this is in consequence of God's long suffering; of his delaying the final punishment.

3. That he may honour the sacrifice and intercession of his Son.

The effect of these is to postpone his judgment, that the terms of reconciliation may be proposed. Christ is an advocate. The barren fig tree was spared at the urgent request of the vine dresser; and in honour of his Son, "who ever liveth to make intercession for us," God is pleased to vouchsafe a longer space to the despisers of his law, and the neglecters of his salvation. Nay, in some instances, God condescends thus to answer the prayers of his people, presented to him in behalf of the ungodly.

4. He also intends the manifestation of his love in seeking with earnestness our recovery.

So he "wills not the death of a sinner," and multiplies means for his recovery. Thus we are to "account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation." He is unwilling to cut us off, and therefore gives space for repentance, and a life of piety.

II. The corrupt perversion of this doctrine by sinful men. They think that God is "like themselves;" and, in matters of religion and moral accountability, bring Deity down to their own standard.

When the Gentiles made gods, they made them like themselves: and the same process takes place in the heart, when there is no visible idolatry. Men regard God through the dark medium of their own obscure and perverted minds; and, in imagination, pour those darkening shadows upon his character, which, in fact, surround themselves.

1. The largest class of men are those who live in a state of almost total indifference to their actions.

Perhaps these seldom hear the truth, and never read it. This is not to be accounted for, but from a vague notion that their sins are as indifferent to God, as they are to themselves. Having scarcely any knowledge, they have scarcely any conscience, except it may be as to the grosser offences against the property or persons of others. For the rest, they have no perception of their evil; and if they think of God at all, they must think him "like themselves." They have no deep and serious impression, that the corruption of their nature renders them infinitely hateful to the holy God, and exposes them to his vengeance.

2. We have another class, which comprehends the various kinds of infidel or unbelieving men.

These have more thought; but only to the same or worse issues.

They have a disposition to speculate on the Divine nature ; but how great a share a corrupt heart has in directing their conclusions, may appear from the fact, the striking fact, that all infidel theories have gone to create security in sin, and to encourage and palliate vice.—Take, for example, the ancient infidels, who said, “How doth God know?” Take those who, under pretence of honouring God, thought it beneath him to look upon human affairs. Take those who pretend that our sins are the result of circumstances, in which God hath placed us ; and that, therefore, he will not punish them. Take any other shades of infidelity, those which are most common. Their abettors find fault with our system of theology ; and sometimes they give us another. But do they give us a purer holiness ? Do they make vice more detestable ? Do they plant any new guards around virtue ? Just the contrary. Their standard is not only lower, but “earthly, sensual,” and often “devilish.” All this proves a total insensibility to the real evil of sin. Infidels transfer this to God, and make him “like themselves.”

3. Another class of men take partial views of sin.

We may allow these to go farther than those we have already mentioned. They consider as sins, and as punishable, all violations of external morality, that is, all personal intemperance, all violations of justice and social and civil obligations ; but of numerous other and deeper offences they are insensible. They see no sin in pride, though it is so hateful to God ; nor in envy, malice, and uncharitableness, which violate the love of our neighbour ; nor in unbelief, though God has made it a damning sin ; nor in that worldly spirit, which makes them every hour violate the “first and great commandment” of the law,—the love of God. Now, if they saw that for these they are as much under the curse as for any other, would they be so insensible ? They transfer the same superficial views to God ; they think him “like themselves.”

4. Religious formalists, who think that ceremonies please God ; that he is a ceremonious being, pleased with outward things.

How does he dissipate these low, but prevalent, notions in this psalm ! “I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains : and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee : for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ? Offer unto God thanksgiving ; and pay thy vows unto the Most High.” We proceed to consider,

III. The fatal result of all these delusions at the last day. “I will reprove thee, and set them in order,” array them, “before thine eyes.”

The words appear very emphatic, and the latter explanatory of the former clause. “I will reprove thee,” not by lengthened reasoning and argument then ; that belongs to the present state ;—so God says, “Come now and let us reason together ;”—but he will then carry the conviction home in a more compendious way : “I will set them in order,” array them as an army drawn up.

Let us pursue the subject in our thoughts. It is awakening but salutary.

1. They shall be arrayed in their number.

We forget our sins ; yet were we to set ourselves to compute those of one day, how surprised should we be by their number ! What then should we think of a life spent in sin ! God never forgets them ; all come from their recesses, and are "set in order" before the eyes of the wicked. If they have been committed in secret, they are now made manifest.

2. They shall be arrayed in full and disclosing light, "before our eyes."

With this compare Psalm xc, 8, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." Our own eye is opened ; and the light of God shines about all our offences. These we must compare with the true standard ; with the law, with the holiness of God, with the purity of Christ ; and thus the terrible discovery of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" will shut our mouths in silence.

3. They shall be arrayed as connected with their root and principle in the heart.

Outward acts are comparatively few ; but the sins of the heart take their places in the ample ranks of the array, of which they fill the greatest space. Thoughts of evil indulged ; envy, discontent, murmuring ; the restless heaving of the carnal, unsubdued mind against the authority of God ; anger, which is murder ; lust, adultery,—all, all shall be set in array.

4. They shall be arrayed in their relations.

Sins are related to each other. One is the parent of others ; and there they shall stand arrayed, like the divisions of an army, each under its chief.

Pride at the head of ambition, oppression, unfeelingness, cruelty, contempt, and vanity.

Covetousness, with its natural products of base worldliness, denials of the claims of the cause of God and of the poor, cheating, knavery, and robbery.

Sensuality, with its thousand acts of gluttony and intemperance.

The enmity of the carnal mind to God, with its hatred of the light, contempt of good men, love of religious errors, and having in its skirts the blood of martyrs.

Sloth, with its neglected opportunities, broken Sabbaths, despised ordinances ; its hypocrisies and masking formalities.

What an array ! Also,

5. There shall be an array of consequences.

"One sinner destroyeth much good." This will never be fully known till the day of judgment. Every sinner is charged with his share in the world's corruption, a nation's vices, the Church's apostasies. But we may be more particular. Is the sinner a minister ? How many of the blind has he led into the ditch ? Is he a master ? How many of those under his influence has he corrupted ? Is he a parent ? The blood of his children is upon him. Every sinner is chargeable, in some degree, with consequences.

6. But the final array shall be of sins against God's mercy ; against

the love of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit, of the Bible, of the Christian ministry, of the Church, of parents and friends.

Now this array you must meet, if you die unpardoned. Take, then, the exhortation, "Now consider this, ye that forget God."

Consider,

1. Its truth. It is fixed. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but the purposes of God to judge the world shall stand.

2. That you are warned in order that you may escape. O suffer not the warning to be lost upon you!

3. That death may be at hand; and then all is judgment as to you. Contemplate the soul in a separate state; the terrors of the general judgment; the intolerable miseries of hell!

4. That you must set sin in array now, if you would escape and fly to Him whose blood will plead for you against your sins. Yes, it now pleads! Happy state of a soul, as to which sin is blotted out, never to be remembered! Who shall lay any thing to the charge of that soul? "It is God that justifieth."

In that day it shall be said, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

SERMON LXIV.—*Friendship with the World.*

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God," James iv, 4.

THIS epistle was written to the Jewish converts scattered throughout the world, and especially in Asia Minor. Many of them were poor and persecuted; and to these the apostle administers consolation. The vices of the unbelieving Jews among whom they lived were many; and these he reprove, and teaches the persons to whom he wrote how to reprove them. And it is probable that many Jews had at that time joined the Christian Church, who were converted but nominally, and brought all the hypocrisy and worldliness of Judaism into Christianity. However that be, it is clear from the epistle that the apostle addresses three classes; the pious and troubled,—the rich and vicious,—and a third class of cowardly conformists to the world, who, for credit among men, for interest or pleasure, betrayed the cause of Christ, and hazarded their souls. To this class of professors, the text is a powerful address; and as human nature is always the same, and we are always exposed to the same dangers, I wish to make a calm appeal to your judgment and consciences upon the important topics which it contains.

Four things will call our attention.

I. The world, the friendship of which is courted by treacherous and lukewarm Christians.

II. The manner in which this unsanctified friendship with the world manifests itself.

III. The aggravation of the crime charged.

IV That more excellent way which the apostle's denunciation suggests.

I. The world, the friendship of which is courted by treacherous and lukewarm Christians.

When we are guarded against intercourse or friendship with a party, it is necessary that the party be marked out by specific characters. Here too we must be guided by Scripture. We are not at liberty to say that all who religiously differ from us are "of the world;" nor, on the other hand, that those who agree with us are not "of the world." The text was not designed to nourish bigotry, but to guard purity.

Some, indeed, would stretch their charity very boundlessly; and contend that, by the world we are to understand all who are not professed Christians; all heathens and Mohammedans, for instance. If so, it would be very easy for us to keep ourselves unspotted. But, brethren, the doctrine of Scripture is, that there is a world in the professing Church. The term was first used by our Lord. He uses it to designate not pagans merely, but a part, a great part, of the Jews, who were God's visible Church.

Think it not strange, then, that we should find a world within the pale of the Christian Church. We shall apply no other than our Lord's own rules; and by them we shall detect it, and array it in characters so marked that you cannot mistake.

Among the Jews, the professing people of God, mark! whom did Christ designate "the world?" All vicious and vain persons: "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

All worldly persons, who preferred earthly to spiritual things: So, in the parable, "one went to his farm, another to his merchandise;" and the master of the feast passes a sentence of exclusion upon them. He was angry, and said, "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

All persons ignorant of the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, so as to have no spiritual knowledge or taste: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me." They did not believe him, because they did not believe the spiritual testimony of the law and the prophets.

All Pharisaic formalists, enemies of the cross of Christ, and of spiritual religion.

All Sadducean skeptics, whatever may be their learning, eloquence, rank, who are vitiated by their unbelief.

By these marks you may always detect the world in the Church; from which world you are to come out as much as the primitive Christians from their pagan neighbours.

We proceed to consider,

II. The manner in which that unsanctified friendship with the world, which is condemned in the text, manifests itself.

And here we must guard, both on the right hand and on the left.—To keep ourselves "unspotted from the world," we are not to go out of the world. Christians ought to be found in every lawful path of life; and God puts them into every various state, that they may show that they have by faith the victory over the world in the noblest sense: in poverty over murmuring; in riches, over sordidness and vanity; in the way of temptations to pleasure, that they may deny themselves; in the walks of business, that they may exhibit an honourable rectitude. They

are open to the seductions of taste and imagination, that they may mortify the mind, as well as the senses, by checking excesses ; and to wrongs and injuries, that they may triumph by meekness, and the spirit of generous forgiveness.

Let it be also understood, that this friendship with the world is not to be avoided by surliness of manners ; not by indifference to the good opinion of the world itself. Religion requires no singularities which have not in them some moral quality. It is innocently cheerful, though grave ; it has a kind and sympathizing heart ; it will have a courteous and respectful manner. We are to “please all men ;” only we are to remember to do it “for their good to edification.”

The culpable courting of the world’s friendship here condemned, manifests itself,

1. In being unwilling to encounter reproach and difficulty for Christ’s sake.

A youth is called of God ; a husband, a wife, a child, is made a happy partaker of true religion. Such a one ought to use no sinful compliances in order to escape reproach, either from near relations, or others.

2. In hiding our opinions, and suffering men to go on in error and spiritual danger, that we may keep up their society.

Christians are to be the light of the world ; and ought never to be ashamed of the words of their Lord.

3. In preferring some interest, some honour, to adherence to conscience.

Every thing, even character, property, life itself, is to be given up for Christ, and to preserve a conscience void of offence.

4. In such an obsequiousness to the world’s maxims and principles, as to lead to, at least, doubtful compliances.

The world has something to say in defence of most of its evils. It has its grave advocates for duelling, for gambling, for the race course, and for the theatre ; although all these things are connected with evils of the most serious magnitude. And no doubt it has much to plead for the approaching festival.*

Now, when we show a ready leaning to all the sophistry by which such practices are defended, there is a sad approach to the friendship of the world. Debatable ground ought to be avoided, where sin is concerned.

III. The aggravation of the crime charged.

If we would know the nature of an evil, we must look into the word of God, who is our Judge. Criminals may jest at frauds and robberies ; but what says the law ?—“O house of Israel, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” Here these friendships with the world which betray Christ are marked by two opprobrious characters :

1. Spiritual adultery.

This implies abnegation of God. The relation in which the Church stands to God is often compared to the marriage covenant. Idolatry,

* This sermon was preached at Oxford-road chapel, Manchester, a short time before a splendid musical festival and fancy ball were held in that town. On this occasion Mr. Watson felt it to be his duty to lift up his warning voice in the two principal chapels of his circuit : and he had the satisfaction to know that his admonitions were not entirely in vain. See his Life, p. 337.

in the language of Scripture, is adultery. It is a violation of the vow and covenant, and is followed by a liability to be put away. The same is here declared concerning "the friendship of the world."

2. Enmity to God.

How often is the friendship of the world marked by a growing dislike to God's control, and to his people! The Bible becomes dull; prayer becomes irksome; and final apostasy is often the sad consequence of worldly compliances.

IV. That more excellent way which the apostle's denunciation suggests.

He would have us decide. The benefits of decision are numerous and great.

1. It is ordinarily attended with less difficulty than a vacillating and hesitating habit. A double-minded man is unstable and unhappy.

2. It is a noble object to aspire to fidelity to God. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." This is the true dignity of man.

3. There is an interesting reciprocation. If we are God's people, he is our God; and we have every thing to expect from him.

4. The real pleasures which decision opens are many and great. It forbids no solid pleasures; it opens religious ones. The conscience is at rest; we have unbounded confidence toward God; and the unclouded prospect of heaven is opened before us.

5. The comforting sense of acting according to our real circumstances, as responsible, dying men, men who are to be judged.

SERMON LXV.—*The Fountain Opened.*

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness;" (*Margin*, "separation for uncleanness;") Zechariah xiii, 1.

THIS is a prophecy respecting the Jews. Its fulfilment has never yet taken place, and will probably be considerably posterior to our times. That it is an unfulfilled, though a glorious prophecy, is plain from the latter part of the preceding chapter. The "spirit of grace and of supplications shall be poured upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem;" "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced;" there shall be a universal "mourning."

But though not fulfilled, as to them; yet, thank God, to us that "fountain" is "opened."

I. What, then, is this fountain?

II. What is its efficacy?

III. What is the day, mentioned in the text, in which it is opened?

I. What is this fountain?

The ancient Jews had their sacrifices and purifying oblations. They have now been long without a sacrifice and a priesthood. They themselves acknowledge this to be one of their calamities. Their mournful sentiments on this subject may be gathered from a part of one of

their prayers, offered yearly on the day which was formerly their great day of atonement: "Wo to us; for we have no mediator!" But then we are not to understand that these Levitical fountains will be opened again, as some have dreamed; and the shadows be again set up, after the substance is come. No; "The blood of bulls and of goats" could never "take away sin." That was reserved for the blood of the great atonement, to which they all looked,—the blood of Christ. The only efficacy they had is expressed by the apostle, when writing to the Hebrews, and he contrasts its feebleness in a manner most interesting to us: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The blood of animals might be an instituted means of taking away a ceremonial guilt, which yet left the sinner as he was before, in regard to the Governor of the world; but it had no fitness to take away moral guilt, because it failed in the two great principles of a true atonement,—a manifestation of the evil of sin, and a demonstration of God's righteous government. These meet in Christ, as the emphatic terms of the text just quoted show. His was a spotless sacrifice, and a sacrifice of infinite value; for it was the sacrifice of a Divine person.

II. Its efficacy, in the removal of "sin and uncleanness."

1. "For sin."

Sin is a "transgression of the law." The law is transgressed three ways,—by a violation of its precepts, by a neglect of its injunctions, and by a defect in its observance; bringing all under the terrible penalty of death.

2. "For uncleanness." The marginal reading is, "separation for uncleanness."

There is an allusion here to the Levitical economy. Defiled persons, who were separated from God in his tabernacle, from the public services, from the congregation, who were thrust without, were all awfully typical of the manner in which sin separates between the soul and God.

Sinners are separated from the Church; they are "aliens to the commonwealth of" the true "Israel." They are estranged from its solemn services. Their prayers do not rise with the common cloud of incense. Sinners are separated from heaven itself. They do not join in its songs, though perhaps they may hear the sound of them. They do not partake of its glory, though they may see it like a distant star. There is a great gulf between them and heaven. By the shedding of the blood of Christ, ye who were once afar off from God are brought nigh to him; nor is there any other means of reconciliation.

We proceed to consider,

III. The day, mentioned in the text, in which this fountain is opened.

1. The day of all others to us the most sacred, solemn, and joyful, is the day of our Lord's crucifixion.

Before I show how the fountain was opened then, it may be proper to remark that blood and water were instruments of purification under the law. This showed that man needs pardon and sanctity. Both of

these must be obtained. One without the other would not meet our case. On the cross this was exhibited. The fountain of blood and of water was opened at the same moment, and from the same source. St. John saw the soldier pierce our Lord's side; and was so impressed with the fact, that forthwith there came out blood and water, that he records it with particular solemnity, and refers to it in his epistles: "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." And he is more remarkable than any of the apostles for uniting the cleansing with the atoning character, when speaking of Christ's sacrifice. Thus, brethren, we have the fountain opened, and provision made, at once, for our pardon and sanctity. You cannot partake of the one without the other. Those whom the Lord justifies he also sanctifies to himself. Thank God, both these blessings are attainable by us.

2. The fountain is opened in the day when the Gospel is first preached in any heathen land.

What an interesting motive to missionary exertions! There is blood enough among the heathen; but not that which takes away sin. There are many reputed sacred rivers and fountains; but sin still cleaves to the people. The day when a missionary first proclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God," is a day to be distinguished for ever in their future chronology. The true fountain is then opened to the people.

3. In the day specially referred to in the text. When the "Spirit of grace and of supplications" shall be "poured" out on all the Jews, and, it would seem, suddenly; when they "shall look upon Him whom they have pierced;" when the great penitential "mourning" shall take place; then shall the fountain be opened; and "all Israel shall be saved." O glorious day! What an impression will be made by it upon the world at large!

4. Whenever a penitent mourns; whenever the Spirit of grace, of softening influence, of prayer, is given; whenever the cry arises, "What must I do to be saved?" and deep mourning appears; then the fountain is specially opened. It is set before you. You are invited to it, and may now be cleansed from all sin.

5. In every means of grace; that pardon may be repeated, and our sinful nature cleansed. We need never attend any of the ordinances of religious worship without receiving a renewed application of the blood of Christ, and a fresh communication of sanctifying grace.

SERMON LXVI.—*Power from on High.*

"But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," Luke xxiv, 49

THESE words were addressed by our Lord to the eleven apostles, and those that were with them, when he was about to leave them; but as he had always promised the Spirit, that is, in a richer effusion than had marked any former dispensation, so now he renews the promise, and bids them wait at Jerusalem "for the promise of the Father;" a phrase which explains the text, "power from on high." They did wait

as all must wait, for this heavenly gift; they "continued in prayer;" they were in the temple "praising and blessing God;" and "when the day of pentecost was fully come," the gift, the great and illustrious gift, was bestowed. As then, at this season, between the resurrection and ascension, the disciples were revolving this promise in their minds, and waiting for its accomplishment, we may probably direct our attention to its import; that, entering into its nature, we may be influenced to seek the same gift which, in his ordinary operations, is promised to us. To the expressive language of the text, I then call your attention. The Holy Spirit is the "power from on high," bestowed by God on man.

I propose to illustrate this description of the blessed Spirit,

I. By the extraordinary effects produced upon the apostles.

II. By the ordinary influence exerted on them, and on all true Christians.

I. I call your attention to the extraordinary operations of the Spirit, not only because of their use in exhibiting the evidence on which Christianity rests; but also because I think it very probable that the work of the Spirit was made so strikingly visible, that we might be more impressed with a sense of his mighty efficacy upon the heart, in his more secret workings, and expect the more in our ordinary experience from his gracious influence.

Consider, then, in these extraordinary gifts which were only intended for the time, how mightily God wrought in man.

1. Take the gift of tongues.

He who knows the difficulty of acquiring a foreign language will perceive how unequivocal a miracle was an infusion of words into the memory, with their meanings and relations, and with that facility of applying them, which instant and rapid speech required. This gift the Spirit imparted to the apostles.

2. Mark the illumination of the mind with the full truth.

The apostles had heard Christ. They had reasoned among themselves. The sun had flamed upon the mists of their prejudices; there had sometimes been a flash of light; and then obscurity had followed. Now all was explained. The harmony of the law and the Gospel, the mystery of faith, were opened to themselves, and to all by them. Here was another miracle.

3. Mark the power with which they spake.

All was light, all feeling. Yes, there was a rush of accompanying energy, the "demonstration of the Spirit," such as accompanied not even the words of Christ. As to those who were not obstinately blind, "they were pricked in their heart." As to others, they could not resist; but when Stephen spoke, the very gnashing of their teeth showed that the unwelcome light had penetrated their dark spirits, and that they hated the light, and hated the man. But they would have hated neither, had they not felt that the light was light from heaven, and the man a man of God.

4. Mark their miracles of healing.

"All the works of Christ" they did, "and greater," that is, more in number; for greater in kind they could not be: "Because," said he, "I go unto my Father," and send the Spirit. They were men, inferior to Christ, who was God-man; yet they performed the very works of

Divinity, because they were "endued with power from on high." The sick were healed. Virtue issued from Peter, as from his Master's garments. The dead were raised. Demons were ejected.

5. Note their discernment of spirits, as in the cases of Ananias and Simon Magus.

The heart was opened to their eyes, not always, perhaps, but on fit occasions ; and man, by the "power from on high," was endued with an attribute of God, to search the heart.

6. Finally, take their courage.

There was courage in all ; some of whom were naturally timid ; the courage, not of excitement merely, but of a calm, deliberate surrender of themselves to shame, suffering, death : not under the eye of an applauding nation, but often alone, unbefriended. "At my first answer," says St. Paul, "no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." There was a courage which shrunk not in the hour of trial. There was not one apostate among them after the "power from on high" descended.

While we see in all these circumstances a demonstration of the truth of the apostles' mission, we see also what God can make man, when he vouchsafes to him the gift of his Spirit. But we are to illustrate the phrase in the text,

II. By the ordinary influences exerted on the apostles, and on all true Christians.

The gift of the Spirit is still "power from on high." True it is that the gifts just mentioned were extraordinary. They answered their end ; they made the glory of God visible to all. When they had done this,—when attention was roused, and Christianity could appeal to these demonstrations as matters of historical fact,—the work was left to be carried on by more secret and invisible influences. So when the cloud of glory descended on the temple, "the priests could not stand to minister, because of the cloud." Yet God was no less the mighty God of Israel, when invisible. The Spirit is now in the Church, working all in all. We have, indeed, been told that, the extraordinary gifts being no longer dispensed, the direct influence of the Holy Spirit was resumed. Let me refute this. It confounds two things, extraordinary and ordinary gifts. One did not necessarily imply the other. All who received the Holy Ghost, as a Teacher and Comforter, did not work miracles ; and some who had gifts, had not renewing grace. Again : If the apostles needed the direct influence of the Holy Spirit to make them Christians, so do we. We are called to imitate them ; but how can we do it, if we have not the same help ? Again : We are called to be all that the Gospel requires. Now, either we can attain this without the Spirit, or we cannot. If we can, man can be saved without God : if we cannot, the Gospel is no longer "the power of God unto salvation ;" "the glory is departed." But all this objection is dispersed by the words of Christ : "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Thank God, if we wait, we too shall be "endued with power from on high." Let us, then, consider how this power manifests itself. And here, too, we shall see a mighty working of God in man, not inferior in real glory, and superior in grace, to those extraordinary illapses.

This is displayed,

1. In the awakening of the soul of man from its deep and deadly sleep of sin.

Who knows not that there are two states of mind, with reference to eternal things? The one is marked by unconcern and neglect. The sinner has no sense of danger, though on its very brink; no abhorrence of sin, though leprous with it; no sense of slavery, though actually bound; no shame and humiliation before God, though an ungrateful forgetfulness and rebellion mark his life. What, then, if this sleep is broken? if the ear listens at last to the reproving, alarming voice? if the danger becomes visible? if fears are fully roused? if the heart breaks under a sense of its ingratitude? if a deep and habitual regard to the soul's interest, and to eternal things, takes full possession of the feelings? What change at the pentecost was greater than this? What is its source? Does man awaken himself? Does he pierce his own conscience? Does he render himself miserable and wretched? The thing is impossible and contradictory. It is the "power from on high" that produces this. And, O! if by this I can obtain a soft and tender heart; if I can be kept in humiliation before God, always awake to spiritual dangers, that I may be impelled to the refuge of the atonement, always living for eternity; then let me bless God, who gives this power to man; and let me wait, in all the earnestness of prayer, until I am endued with it.

2. Our subject is illustrated by the office of the Spirit as the Comforter.

Here, also, are two states of mind; one of fear and alarm; the other of faith, and a joyful sense of reconciliation with God. Here is a change as marked, as miraculous, as the other. Here, too, is the "power from on high." And if this be the result; if for these doubts, I may receive assurance; if for this dread of God, I may receive the Spirit of adoption; then let me wait till I am endowed with this heavenly gift, the Spirit who cries in every believing heart, "Abba Father."

3. We have another instance in the office of the Spirit as the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier.

There is not a sin from which we may not cease. But this power is not of man; it is the "power from on high," destroying the love of sin, breaking its power, and so filling the soul with the fear and love of God, that the dart of temptation falls blunted and broken, and the ennobled and freed spirit cries, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. Take a final instance from the fruits of the Spirit.

Mark the enumeration of them: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Now, when these are called the fruits of the Spirit, the expression intimates that they are not of man. Of these fruits the human heart is naturally as barren as the waste is of "corn, and wine, and oil." Even what approaches nearest to them is utterly different. Natural good temper is not "love" to God; cheerfulness of spirit is not "joy" in the Lord; tranquility is not "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." But let the contrast be as complete as possible: let the heart be hating and malignant; here "love" shall grow: let it be gloomy and dark; here "joy" shall spring up: let it be turbulent and restless; here

"peace" shall establish her dominion. All this is miracle, too : it is "power from on high."

I apply this subject to your edification, by observing,

1. That there is a power promised to you more glorious than all the endowments of apostolic gifts. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

2. Fix the greatness of the blessing before you. The baptism of secret fire is invisible to the eye ; but it works powerfully and constantly, softening the heart, kindling joy, diffusing purity, giving energy in duty, carrying you up in devout thoughts to heaven. If you seek it, all this is yours.

3. Do you ask how you are to attain it ? See your example in the apostles. Believe your Lord : "I send the promise of my Father upon you." Wait for this, not idly, but in prayer, in the public means ; for they "were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

4. Know, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Aspire, then, to this.

5. Ask the effusion of the Spirit upon your friends, the whole Church, and the world. Even that shall come.

SERMON LXVII.—*The Results of Messiah's Death.*

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy," Daniel ix, 24.

IN this chapter we have a fine picture of a true patriot. Daniel felt the weight of calamity under which his countrymen groaned, and sought to remove it. Observe the method he took. He "set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes : and he prayed unto the Lord his God, confessing his sin, and the sin of Israel." And how prevalent is prayer ! An angel was "caused to fly swiftly," that so he might "understand the matter."

The prophecy with which he was favoured was suited to the state of his mind. His anxiety about his city and people was not produced merely by feelings of patriotism, but was connected with his views of Messiah and salvation. As Jacob had said, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord !" so Daniel had his holy musings, his ardent aspirations, on this all-important subject. The angel meets this inquiry of that salvation which the future was more fully to unfold, first of all, though he had much to communicate as to the Jews themselves.

The clauses of so eminent a prophecy must necessarily have each a distinct and emphatic meaning ; and to them, in their order, our at-

tention will be directed. We may, however, previously remark, that this is a very important distinction between the predictions of Daniel, and those of other prophets, that in them the times and seasons are more distinctly specified. Of that contained in the text there has been the most exact accomplishment. After these seventy weeks of years, the Messiah did appear, and all the glorious subjects contained in the prophecy were realized. The Messiah was cut off, but not for himself, not for sins of his own. The benefit of his death was to descend to others, even to the race of mankind. It was for us that this grand epoch was fixed; the most illustrious in the annals of time; to be remembered when all others are forgotten.

I. The first of the results of Messiah's coming and death here enumerated is, "to finish the transgression."

The word "finish," here used, signifies to cancel, to annihilate; destroying or removing the effects of any thing. "Transgression" is in the singular number; and the reference plainly appears to be to the first, the original transgression; that offence of one by which sin and death came into our world, and spread their malignant ravages through our whole race. And were the effects of this transgression, so deep, so wide, so fatal, to be cancelled? They were. Such was the design of God. They are cancelled. Such is the effect of the death of Christ. The sin of Adam averted from mankind the eye of God's complacency; the death of Christ turns it upon us, beaming with compassion. The transgression of one broke the vital connection of the soul with God; and the Divine life, the very principle of holiness, was extinguished. The Messiah restores it, and makes a creature, of himself only capable of sin, capable of all holiness. The transgression extinguished the light of that bright and accurate moral knowledge which was in the first man, and now the human spirit wanders in error and gloom. The Messiah comes, and cries, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." The transgression destroyed the devotional intercourse of man with God, silenced the hymns of paradise, sealed up the lips which had poured forth the prayers of filial confidence, and made mankind prayerless, thankless, and godless. Through Messiah, there is the overture of restored communion, and, with it, of the strength, the felicity, and the glory of man. God cries to every one of us, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts." By the transgression disease and affliction were brought in. Christ takes away their punitive character, converts them into salutary discipline, and will finally remove them. And by the transgression came death, that all-comprehending evil. But as by one came death, by one comes also the resurrection of the dead. Over no particle of mortal dust shall death finally triumph. Thus, to every believer, shall the transgression be completely finished, and all its effects, both in soul and body, fully and for ever cancelled.

II. The second result to be accomplished by the death of Messiah was, "to make an end of sins."

As "transgression" is in the singular, so "sins" is plural; noting to us the effect of the one transgression in a multitude of sins. An awful picture is here brought before us. Who shall cast up this mighty amount of ingratitude, rebellion, and mischief? How various are the

sins of the heart ! And how copiously, how constantly, do the streams flow from that fountain, issuing both in words and actions ! They sink into the depths of society ; they ascend to its loftiest heights. It is by this multitude of sins that wars are kindled, and the fetters of oppression riveted. They blast and wither the fairest portions of the earth. They invade the Church itself, darken its bright and glorious truths, pollute its primitive purity, and make the house of God a temple of demons, and a den of thieves.

But the Messiah came "to make an end of sins." O what a cheering sound is that ! Nor is it a delusion. The process is certain, and, as might be expected, peculiar. The methods on which the wisdom of the world depends have no place here. The mighty work is not to be achieved by cold reason, demonstrating the evils of moral slavery, and leaving its votaries slaves still ; not by the tongue of the rhetorician, descanting on the beauties of virtue, in the vain hope of curing a disease by rounding eloquent periods on the excellencies of health ; not by the application of legislative authority, restraining a few outward acts, and leaving the evil within too deep to be reached by human law ; not by the half-reproving voice of Eli, "Why do ye such things ? Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear ;" not even by the terrors of a Divine law, making Israel afraid one hour, while the next they dance about the golden calf, furnishing a striking comment on the text, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." Not thus is there an end to be made of sins. All comes from Messiah's death. By the ransom price which he has paid, he has brought the race into his mercy, and sends down the Spirit to convince of sin, to reprove the conscience, and make the burden of transgression felt, to excite prayers for deliverance, and then to administer it, delivering the groaning creature out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Yes ; an end of sins. When we are "in Him that is true," there is an end of their power. They are no longer the objects of desire and love, but of hatred and abhorrence. We then renounce them utterly, presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice to God. By the power of his sanctifying grace he shall make a full end of sins, preserving our whole spirit, and soul, and body blameless. And when we enter that bright world to which he is conducting us, there shall be an end of sins for ever. And the process shall go on triumphantly even in the present world. He who saves an individual can save society ; and thus shall he go on, conquering and to conquer, till righteousness shall spring up out of the earth, and truth look down from heaven, and all flesh together behold the glory of the Lord.

III. But we are conducted, thirdly, to that from which all these blessings flow, even to the grand atonement. The Messiah was "to make reconciliation for iniquity."

The word translated "reconciliation" signifies "to cover," "to hide ;" and thus gives us the true idea of atonement. That does not, cannot, make sin not to be. There it is. Man is a sinner ; and the fact can neither be denied nor altered. Sin exists ; and, as a Judge, God must look at it, must animadvert upon it, must judge it. Had no atonement been made, sin would have continued spread before the face of almighty God, the righteous, the holy Judge ; and mankind would have

stood unsheltered, and exposed to his just and fearful displeasure. And such is, in point of fact, the condition of all who will not avail themselves of that "reconciliation for iniquity," which the Messiah made when he was "cut off, not for himself, but for the sins of the people." O think of this. God's eye is upon your sins to number them, and bring them forth to judgment. He says, "I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." He sees them, in order duly to apportion their punishment. So the apostle speaks of "tribulation and anguish" coming "upon every soul of man that doeth evil, upon the Jew first, and also upon the Gentile." How fearful a condition! Every thing in justice proceeds with exactness; and this just and holy Judge "has set our iniquities before him, our secret sins in the light of his countenance." See, then, the effect of atonement. The Messiah dies for sin, he bears the penalty, gives death for death, makes the satisfaction required; and thus we see that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses." As to all them that truly believe in Christ, sin is covered. God, as Judge, sees it not in order to animadversion and punishment. Behold in this an exposition of many important passages of Scripture: "Blessed is he whose sin is covered, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity;" to whom, in its penal consequences, he reckons it not.—"Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." They shall be as though bound to a stone, thrown into the deep, and so covered by the veil of the profound waters. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions," so that they no longer appear in the record against us; "and will not remember thy sins," which thus become, in effect, as though they had not been. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions." As the dense and dark cloud, which casts its deep and chilling shadow on the earth, is melted and dispersed, and there is the clear shining of the sun, so does God remove our sins, so lift upon us the light of his countenance. Believing with the heart unto righteousness, fixing our trust on the great atonement, he will "cast all our sins behind his back." He will not take them into the account; in his gracious dealings with us, he treats us as though we had not sinned; we become "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and he rejoices over us to do us good.

IV "And to bring in everlasting righteousness."

I take this to be a description of the Gospel dispensation. To the Jews it had been said, "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God." And even in reference to the brief dispensation of John, our Lord said, when he went to his baptism, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." In this view of the subject two ideas are contained.

1. In the Gospel are presented to us the means of becoming righteous before God.

Substantially, the same means had existed before; but they were presented chiefly in type, and shadowy representation. Abel's sacrifice really referred to Christ. Abraham saw his day, as in the obscurity of distance, afar off. The Jews had their various ceremonies, the shadows of good things to come. All these were temporary, because only introductory and typical. But now we are called to "behold

the Lamb of God, which," not figuratively, but really, "taketh away the sin of the world." The rule, to the very end of time, is, "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." This is now in force. Art thou burdened in spirit? Receive the clear testimony concerning the Saviour. The Son of man is lifted up for thy health and cure. Look to him, and thou shalt live. In the Gospel "is the righteousness of God revealed."

2. We see the full perfection of the Gospel.

By no other dispensation is it to be succeeded; no future revelation is to be expected, no higher means looked for. And for this reason, that nothing more is needed. God has given us his Son, his Spirit, his holy word. The perfect means of making you righteous before God, and in yourselves, are afforded. We receive, therefore, the kingdom which cannot be moved. "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption," all are brought in by Christ, and through him we may claim and enjoy the whole.

V "To seal up the vision and prophecy."

Either, 1. To terminate it in the Jewish Church. It is a remarkable fact, that after Messiah came they had no vision. None of their eminent rabbies were prophets. Or, 2. To accomplish it. And in fulfilment of prophecy we have a glorious evidence of the truth of Christianity. Look at the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and see its wonderful accomplishment in the person, sufferings, and glory of Christ.

VI. "To anoint the most holy." Literally, the holy of holies; the sacred body of our Lord, in which dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead.

The ancient tabernacle was a type of this. As in that tent God dwelt, so when "the Word was made flesh," his tent, his tabernacle, was pitched among us. He is anointed, consecrated, and set apart, as our Teacher, our Priest, our Sovereign. In all these characters we are to trust in him. As a Teacher, he is infallible. As a Priest, having atoned for sin, he pleads for us in the heavenly sanctuary. As our Sovereign, he rules by his holy laws, and in the exercise of his benevolence and wisdom.

SERMON LXVIII.—*The Crucifixion.*

"Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned," Luke xxiii, 47, 48.

"God forbid that I should glory," says St. Paul, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He had reason for this. He referred, first, to the moral effects of the cross; then to the doctrines from which those effects flowed. And he might refer to the events of the crucifixion itself, so full of instruction, so glorious to the Saviour, even in his suffering, and so truly the glorying of his disciples.

The text I have read carries us to this scene. We often go thither. Our only hope is there. We think of the love, the suffering, and the

result of all in the atonement, and its spiritual benefits. Thus we "live by faith;" and these subjects shall ever feed that faith, that life, till we fall at our Saviour's feet in heaven, and begin the eternal song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Yet, as the disciples were invited to "see the place where the Lord lay;" to mark every circumstance, the "stone rolled away," and the "grave clothes folded up;" so we may say, "Come see the place where the Lord died." The scene is crowded. That "sight," so emphatically mentioned in the text, is such as never was seen before, and never will be seen again. And the circumstances are all of a nature as peculiar as the event which gave rise to them. The work now before our Lord was a work of suffering and dying; but not merely so. Were we to confine ourselves to these, we should approach the immolation of an illustrious martyr; but nothing more. But this great event rises before us under higher aspects. The grand atonement was now to be offered; and he who was to offer it was mysteriously both priest and sacrifice. The High Priest, high beyond all others, was now to enter into his office; and the oblation was to be worthy of the priesthood, the offerer, and the consequences which should follow. He was himself such a being as never appeared on earth before; such as earth shall never see again, until he shall come to judge all her kindreds.

The grand offices of Christ are three,—prophetical, priestly, and kingly; and his entrance upon them all was marked with circumstances at once singular and sublime; and all attest that with these offices he was invested by the Father. The prophetic office was confirmed by a series of miracles, and crowned with that of the transfiguration. The regal office was established by the glories of the resurrection and ascension, and by the effusion of the Spirit; and all these testified the greatness of his power and dominion. And has his entrance on the great office of his priesthood no peculiar demonstrations, no circumstances to mark the grandeur of its character, and to appear as the confirmation of God? My brethren, the short history of our Lord's passion is crowded with them; and to bring some of them at least before you, that your meditations at this season may be assisted, is my present purpose. May we rightly read the characters impressed on these seals, which authenticate the appointed one and eternal sacrifice; and may the impression be transferred to our hearts and hopes!

I. The first circumstance is, the testimony which the last scenes of our Lord's passion afford to his entire innocence.

This is all-important. A sinless person only could be a substitute for the sinful; or, if the highest created nature, he must himself become liable to penalty. All the representations of the Old Testament were indicative of this. He is called the "Seed of the woman," not of the man; that by a peculiar birth he might escape the common contagion of sin. The typical animals were free from spot. Like these animals, he was to be judicially stricken; but not for his own sins. "He was wounded for our transgressions," says Isaiah. And when he came into the world, this was the testimony of the angel, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Thus he only became "sin," a sin-offering, "for us, who knew no sin," to whom the very principle of sin was unknown. Now, that this was

the fact, the perfectly blameless life of Jesus is the striking proof.—Here is not even a failing to excuse, much less a sin to palliate. He was watched with jealousy, living in the public eye, or always surrounded with disciples, who were to hazard their all upon this, that he was the Holy, the Anointed, the Messiah. What comes out upon his trial? for tried he was, as a malefactor. He is condemned for asserting that he was what he was in truth, the Son of God. Pilate “took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person.” Herod, though he derides him, finds no criminal charge against him. The daughters of Jerusalem weep for him, in remembrance of all those benevolent works which he had performed among them. The very multitude “smote their breasts and returned,” as feeling that the guilt was theirs, not his. The reputable Joseph of Arimathea begged his body for honourable burial. The no less respectable women who had followed him, and knew his private walk among his disciples, with a faith which could not be shaken, and a love which could not be quenched, take spices to embalm him. And the very inscription on his cross, answering to the scroll which was hung over the head of all crucified persons, proclaiming their offences, and which, in his case, was openly emblazoned in three several tongues, was not a charge of crime, but a publication of his official rights and majesty: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Thus were our sins washed away by untainted blood. He died, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

II. We see in the circumstances of the death of our Lord, a marked and eminent fulfilment of prophecy and prophetic types.

If the hope of man was directed to a Deliverer, it was natural to conclude, that some eminent marks should be afforded, by which he might be known. Such was one great intent of prophecy and type; they were portraits of his character, indications of his conduct, prefigurations of the circumstances by which his advent might be ascertained. The very number and variety of such predictions and prefigured circumstances rendered it impossible for this person to be mistaken. He must answer to them all, as “face answers to face in a glass.” One real, substantiated discrepancy would be fatal to his claims. It will be equally clear to you, that in proportion as these ancient prophecies and types were particular, and related to circumstances over which no individual could have control, would be the impossibility either of deception on the one part, or of fanciful application on the other. This will show us the reason and the wisdom of the several instances of the striking accomplishment of minute predictions and types at the crucifixion of Jesus. For if all, great and minute, were fulfilled in him, then is he that Redeemer to whom all the prophets gave witness. Already had prophecies, some of a large and general meaning, others of this more minute character, been fulfilled in him; such as his being born of a virgin, his appearing before the sceptre had departed from Judah, his birth at the time fixed by the prophetic weeks of Daniel, in Bethlehem, of the house of David, his being filled with the Spirit, endowed with miraculous powers, and many others, all characters of the Messiahship, which were seen in none but in him. But now look at the irresistible strength of the evidence flowing from the minuter prophecies and circumstances of types. These are so minute, so appa-

rently incidental, so out of the reach of all conjecture, so far beyond all anticipation, that if they were fulfilled in Jesus, the conclusion is inevitable, that they were uttered by Him who only sees the future; and they thus attest that Jesus was "the Lamb slain," in the intention of God, "from the foundation of the world." Shall I take that ancient type of the great redemption, the passover, which was understood so to be by the spiritual Jews themselves? Of the passover, not a bone was to be broken. This circumstance is not to be explained, but as typical. See it verified in our Lord. Water and blood were the instruments of purification under the law. Out of his side flowed the double stream of water and blood. This was not natural; it was evidently preternatural, to mark the true oblation, and to show that the atonement and washing away of sin were by him. Let us turn to a prophetic psalm: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." Nothing could possibly be more out of the reach of conjecture; yet see the Roman soldiers, at the foot of the cross, unconsciously giving their testimony to Jesus. Let us take the celebrated fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which the ancient Jews as well as Christians acknowledged to be a prediction of the Messiah: "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." So Jesus was before the bar of Pilate. Not to multiply instances, it is said that he should be "with the rich in his death." How unlikely! Yet "a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, laid his body in his own new tomb."

Now, these are not curious coincidences. Remember the grand purpose. Why all these types and prophecies? We admire their grandeur; we are dazzled with their splendour; but whether they shine as a blaze of broad refulgent light, opening the scenes of future salvation to the eye of patriarchs, lawgivers, prophets, priests, kings; or whether they are fainter lines of prophetic revelation, they all verge toward one point: the focus in which they meet is the person and cross of Christ. They irradiate, as with a crown of glory, the head which was bound with thorns; they descend upon the sacrifice, to demonstrate that it is both Divine and divinely appointed; and they bid us "behold," with assured trust, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,"—the one universal atonement.

III. Another circumstance among the attestations given to the priestly office of our Lord at his crucifixion, was, that its efficacy was shown to consist in the giving of spiritual and eternal life to guilty man.

Other benefits resulted from it. It attested his doctrine. It established his religion. It secured the restoration of bodily immortality to man. But its highest character was, the gift of spiritual life to souls dead in sin, and of eternal life to souls liable to eternal death. If you ask, What circumstances displayed this? I point you to the penitent malefactor, who was crucified with him. If you look at this singular and affecting event merely as an instance of a penitent sinner's finding mercy in his last moments, I grant that you fix upon an interesting example of the infinite compassion of God. But you take in only a part of the truth. He might have found that mercy under other circumstances. Why did he find it on the cross? Why was it administered by one dying the same shameful death as himself? There were great reasons for this; and they are not hidden from us. Think of the case.

Whatever he might have been, he came to his punishment in a very different state of mind from that of the other malefactor. Nothing is more clear than that either he was the subject of a previous work of God in his heart, during his imprisonment, or that he became a subject of it very suddenly, and soon after he was nailed to the cross. One malefactor reviles our Lord, hoping, perhaps, to obtain favour from his enemies, and to be taken down from the cross. In the other, there is a meek and subdued spirit. He asks, "Dost not thou fear God?" acknowledge thy sin, and fear to offend by reviling the innocent. He acknowledges the justice of his sentence: "We suffer justly." He strangely regards Christ under a light more strong than his own disciples had done, as a spiritual Saviour. He is not stumbled by his humiliation or dying; he recognizes him as a spiritual King, and as having a spiritual kingdom, a heavenly kingdom, into which he was about to enter, and the rewards of which he was about to bestow. He is concerned for his honour, and for his own salvation. What could produce this, but a wondrous work of grace within? Does it not oblige us to exclaim, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but the Father which is in heaven?" It was the Father who had revealed it by the Spirit. He was an illustration of our Lord's own words, "Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me;" and "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Thus prepared of the Father by true penitence, and a mighty faith, he was at this very moment given to Christ, that the spiritual, saving, pardoning, glorifying virtue of the sacrifice he was offering might be publicly set forth, and manifested to all future ages. "Lord," says he, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;" and the gracious reply is, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." O beautiful and rich example of the efficacy of the true sacrifice to take away sin, all sin! Now learn from the cross that, whoever thou art, if broken in spirit, humbled, acknowledging a rejected Christ, flying to him, thou sayest, "Lord, remember me!" thou shalt have a gracious answer; thou too shalt be with him in paradise. His blood cleanseth from all sin.

IV The external prodigies which took place were also most impressive attestations to the priesthood of Christ.

They were such that all trembled with awe, or were overwhelmed with dread; except the chief priests, who were given up to the hardness of their own hearts. Even the centurion, "when he saw what was done, glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man."

That the prodigies were supernatural, is sufficiently manifest. Had it been the sun darkened only, or an earthquake only, these might have been thought coincidences, singular, it is true, yet accidental. But the dead rise to life; and the veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom. Taken together, therefore, it is manifest that there was an interposition of God himself; and if so, it was to declare his acceptance of the grand oblation. New and visible seals were set upon its value, and upon the authority of our Lord's priesthood; and those who had asked a "sign from heaven" now had signs both from heaven and earth, and even from the recesses of their sacred temple.

That they were all symbolical, as well as attesting, is probable, because we know that two of them were so. The temporary obscuration

of the sun might indicate that, though the original splendour of the Son of God had been hidden under the deep cloud of his sufferings, yet he should burst forth again, in all the glories of his character and offices, in the courts of heaven, into which he was about to enter; and the earthquake might indicate those mighty revolutions which take place in society, wherever the cross of Christ is planted, which never fails, sooner or later, to shake down every form of superstition and power opposed to it. As, however, the precise import of these two prodigies is not stated, I do not dwell upon them; but of the two others the import is fixed by allusions in other passages of Scripture; and they both bear directly upon the priesthood of Christ, the sacrificial branch of which he was at that moment accomplishing.

Why was the veil rent? The apostle answers, To open the new and living way to God.

It was "new;" therefore it abolished the old, brought the sacrificial system to an end, desecrated all that was holy before, turned attention and faith from all offerings but Christ's; from the priests, who had infirmity, to him alone; and it made the way common to all people.

It was "living;" the way of life, the safe way by which we may go to God, the invisible, heart-searching, holy God, and may, "come even to his seat."

And it is the way to the holiest places above. Christ is our Fore-runner. Such was the virtue of this sacrifice, that, to all nations, the way is now open to God; and death is such a change, that, when the believer yields up his spirit, it stands at once in the holy places above, the holy of holies, the heaven of heavens.

Why were the dead raised? Many curious questions might be asked on this subject. We have, however, no business with them; but have simply to show that the blood of Christ reconciled the body as well as the soul. The whole man is his "purchased possession." Nothing shall be lost; but, "I will raise it up at the last day." "Wherefore comfort yourselves with these words."

Such were the attestations of this hour to the priesthood of our Lord. Let us learn from it some important conclusions.

1. That the grand atonement is made for sin. Nothing more is necessary, nothing more is required of you, than to receive the merited salvation; no sacrifices, ceremonies, penances; nothing but, if penitent, thankfully and believingly to receive all the blessings of eternal love.

2. That the sacrifice has purchased all things; spiritual life, pardon, adoption, regeneration, comfort, victory over death, and eternal life. All are yours, to be received freely.

3. The guilt of neglect is great. In regard to the impenitent and unbelieving, sin remains; but it is fearfully aggravated; and the punishment which awaits those who neglect so great salvation is tremendous in its extent, and endless in its duration.

4. You have dwelt on the circumstances of your Saviour's death; but forget not the love of the sufferer,—love from first to last. O let it excite yours! Jesus "delivers us from the wrath to come." Let us show our love to him in all holy submission to his will. This is the principle which shall give cheerfulness to our obedience, and join us to him in heaven.

SERMON LXIX.—*The Shaking of Heaven and Earth.*

“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, (*margin*, may be shaken,) as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire,” Hebrews xii, 26–29.

WHEN he wrote these words, the apostle had been speaking of the terrible manner in which the law was given. In that he finds an argument for a reverent attention to the Gospel. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth.” The trembling of the mount reminds him of a prophecy in Haggai ii, 6, relative to the shaking of “the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land,” with “all nations,” that “the Desire of all nations may come.” “And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.” This prophecy relates to the ecclesiastical and civil convulsions of all nations which preceded the advent of Christ. But as the temple was a type of the Church, it may be applied to the changes and convulsions, ecclesiastical and civil, in “heaven and earth,”—which shall transpire before that Church is filled with the glory of the Lord. The apostle, viewing this picture of change and ruin, introduces the “kingdom which cannot be moved,” as a contrast. To make way for this, all other things should be “shaken;” and itself should stand unmoved amidst the universal concussion. And thus, having fixed the attention of the Hebrews upon the perishing, changing things of earth, and the changeless realities of the kingdom of God, he grounds upon the whole that important practical lesson with which the text concludes: “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.”

We have in this passage the following particulars:—

I. The “removing of the things that may be shaken, as of things that are made.”

II. The immovable character of the kingdom of Christ.

III. The practical application which is enforced by these important considerations. “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

We call your attention,

I. To the “removing of the things that may be shaken, as of things that are made.”

The phrase, “things that are made,” gives a reason why they may be shaken. The word “made” may signify, appointed, or permitted, for the time; but destined, when that is accomplished, to be shaken. Both senses are probably included,—one agreeing best to some of the things to be shaken, the other to others.

1. The first power to which the apostle refers, is the ecclesiastical constitution of the Jewish people.

This is strongly marked by his emphatic mode of speaking: "Not the earth only, but also heaven." In prophetic language, heaven sometimes signifies rulers; earth, people. But heaven occasionally serves to express the ecclesiastical power of a state; and earth, the civil. The apostle had a reason for dwelling upon this. The Jews believed their law and religion would be eternal; the apostle puts them among the things which might be "shaken." They were appointed for the time; they had served for a shadow; they had fulfilled their office; and, though the unbelieving Jews clung to them, they had become dead, had "waxed old," and were "ready to vanish away." Their glory was eclipsed by the superior glory of Christ's kingdom. The priesthood terminated in him; the sacrifice was taken away by his perfect offering; the priests had fulfilled their course; the temple had received its crowd of worshippers, but the rending of the veil desecrated the whole. The "bringing in of a better hope" changed the ground of human confidence; salvation was no longer of the Jews; and, in a short time, the altar was overturned as a useless thing, and the temple was ploughed up as a field. Thus the "heaven" of the Jews was "shaken," and all its stars fell; that the eyes of all men might behold the "Sun of righteousness," and the whole world might be filled with his glory.

2. The Jewish state, "the earth," was also to be shaken.

That had fulfilled its office. As a separate community, till the Messiah should come, its office was to preserve truth, though it often proved unfaithful; and that the Messiah might be known to spring from the house of David, the stem of Jesse, the tribe of Judah. Till these ends were answered, the Divine patience spared it, and did not wholly shake it down. But then the country was swept with the besom of destruction. All families, all tribes, were confounded; and they have been wanderers and strangers in all lands ever since. Whether they will ever be gathered again as a nation, is matter of controversy. I doubt it. But if so, of this I am sure, that it will be as God's ancient, not as his peculiar, people; not as a people to preserve the truth, as formerly; not to be in any special covenant, for that has been done away; not to have any eminence, except their faith should be more eminent; "for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek." All that is shaken down. It was that which might be "moved,"—a manifestly temporal character, and has passed away for ever.

3. The "removing of the things which may be shaken," applies to every power, ecclesiastical or civil, that sets itself against the "kingdom which cannot be moved."

When the "kingdom which cannot be moved" shall be fully established, civil powers will remain, perhaps also a variety of ecclesiastical forms; but as they will all submit to Christ's doctrines and laws, they will be in the kingdom, and cannot be shaken. Kings shall bring their "glory and honour" into the Church; and "incense and a pure offering," although presented in different vessels, shall ascend from all the Churches. There may, also, before that time, be states and Churches, which, as acknowledging Christ, and favouring the establishment of the "kingdom which cannot be moved," shall escape these convulsions. But whatever is opposed to it shall be shaken. Hence all

pagan powers, all Mohammedan powers, all professed Christian powers which hold corruptions of Christianity, and persecute and enslave God's people, by denying the Scriptures, freedom of private judgment, and full liberty of conscience and worship, are anti-christian; they are the "man of sin," or the children of the man of sin, that wicked one, "whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Firmly as they have cemented and fortified themselves, how great has been, and still is, the shaking among them! The Reformation, the French Revolution, the falling of the sceptre from the pagan powers, all attest this. And what a picture the world presents at this moment! Two or three sceptres only are left to paganism. Principles are at work which must destroy popery; because it sets itself against the liberties and interests of mankind. And now a Christian state, which is of recent date, whose founder, Peter the Great, almost within the memory of our old men, wrought in our dock yards, in order to qualify himself to teach useful arts to his people, and to lay the foundations of national greatness in knowledge and industry, has risen to the rank of a first rate power; and having humbled Persia, one of the only two states which support Mohammedanism, now thunders at the gates of the Turkish capital; while every enslaved Christian, who has been called a dog, and treated as one, out of pure enmity to his Master, Christ, now "lifts up his head," knowing that his "redemption draweth nigh." The loosing, the shaking, has been going on, sometimes gradually, sometimes aided by sudden convulsions; but all that has opposed, or is opposing Christ, presents a tottering aspect. A hand, mightier than the hand of Samson, is upon the pillars; and all the lords of the Philistines shall not stay the fall of the mighty ruin, when the Spirit of God descends upon the appointed agents, and endues them with more than human strength, and when they bow in their might, and shake the trembling structures which have so long defied the Lord and his Anointed.

II. We have, in the text, the immovable character of the kingdom of Christ,—“a kingdom which cannot be moved.”

Not that Christ's kingdom is not subject to various changes, sometimes “minished and brought low;” but this only serves to demonstrate that there is a hand supporting it from above. What can account for the existence of pure, vital Christianity at this day, after all its struggles? Hell and earth have been in arms against it; the hostility of ages is unabated to this day; the carnal mind still assails it; yet it exists. But we are to understand by this declaration of our text,

1. That the kingdom of Christ is not to be displaced by any dispensation, differing in its principle.

It is a spiritual kingdom. Those who set up an earthly, visible one, set up a new principle. This is the case especially with those who contend for Christ's personal reign on earth, at Jerusalem.

2. That it shall be found unshaken, when all that can be shaken has passed away.

The song of the ancient saints was, “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.”—The annunciation of the angel was, “Of his kingdom there shall be no end.” The vision of Nebuchadnezzar, discovered and interpreted by Daniel, represented this kingdom as a “stone cut out of the mountain

without hands," which should "never be destroyed," but should "stand for ever." "All flesh is as grass," said a persecuted apostle writing to a persecuted people, when Christianity was new, and all the powers of earth were combined against it: "the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." This is the faith of the good man. Luther, in danger, when the Reformation was rocked in storms, sung the forty-sixth psalm: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." And the Wesleys, amidst the scoffs of an infidel nation, and the roaring of its senseless mobs, when there were but few signs of life amidst the general death, sung,—

"Jesus, the Conqueror, reigns,
In glorious strength array'd,
His kingdom over all maintains,
And bids the earth be glad."

And all the facts of history confirm this. The Roman power is passed away; the Gothic barbarian is melted; the Mohammedan is hastening to depart; the pagan is bowing its head in decrepitude: but this kingdom is all vigorous and aggressive; it lives and moves; it attacks error and sin, and triumphs over all opposition.

3. It retains its saving efficacy, unimpaired by time, unwasted by affliction.

The sacrifice of Christ preserves its virtue; his intercession, its prevalency; the influences of the Spirit, their power; and the covenant, its force. The experience of saints is as rich, their lives are as holy, their deaths as peaceful, as ever. Mark the glory of this.

III. The practical application which is enforced by these important considerations: "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

To "serve God" is a comprehensive phrase; and includes, in fact, every part of practical and devotional piety, and the principles from which all flow. Here to "serve God acceptably" includes,

1. An entrance into this kingdom by an open avowal, not merely of Christianity, but of Christianity as a spiritual kingdom; by a cordial reception of religion in its true principle and design; by renouncing the world, and entering the kingdom to partake of its spiritual blessings.

2. To "serve God acceptably" may be taken as a sacrificial expression, drawn from the ancient service.

When the people brought their offering to the priests according to the ritual, and then only when there was this conformity, they served "acceptably." This kingdom has also its sacrificial institutes. We have a Priest, a sacrifice, a mode of approach to God. No other service, even in the Church, is acceptable. You are to present that service; to approach as sinners; always to draw near in faith; that you may receive and thus show forth the atonement as the only ground of human hope, and prove that it is so by the joy of your faith, and the vigour of your spiritual life. To renounce this were to draw back to perdition.

To serve "with reverence and godly fear," may be illustrated by referring to the destruction of Nadab and Abihu, and the two hundred and fifty adherents of Korah, with their censers, by fire from the Lord. The apostle has this in view; and the reason is obvious. These men rebelled against God's appointments, and wished to serve him some other way; and were consumed. So the Hebrews might be tempted to corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel, or to go back to Judaism; but in neither case could God be served "acceptably." They would find him "a consuming fire." Thus if we would "serve God acceptably," we must serve him evangelically, according to the exact rule of the Gospel institutes.

3. To "serve God acceptably" is to obey the laws of the kingdom from the only principles which can ever make obedience acceptable,—from a conviction of their righteousness and their goodness; from a renewed heart; from love; and with perseverance.

4. To "serve God acceptably" is to enlarge the influence of this kingdom.

God carries on his work by human means, giving them efficiency by his blessing. This is a service required; and it is an acceptable one. Angels know that it is so; and they take their part. The apostles were the Lord's servants, and laboured, "whether present or absent," to be "accepted of him." And so much importance does Christ attach to this service, that the common offices of hospitality, performed to those employed in his work, have their reward. "He that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."

All this is to be done "with reverence and godly fear;" rightly feeling this truth, that "our God is a consuming fire." Survey the history of his judgments in the world, and in the Church; the declaration of his word against formalists and hypocrites, light and chaffy professors; and learn that triflers in religion are the objects of his wrath.

Then "let us have grace." This mode of expression shows that there is grace to be obtained, if we will have it. O seek it in earnest prayer!

There are many motives to this:—

1. If we escape the judgment, as to anti-christian powers, we are yet surrounded with things that may be "removed."

2. If we escape the fiery trial on earth, we shall not at the last judgment. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

3. The pleasure of serving God in his kingdom is unspeakably great. That service is perfect freedom. When we hearken to the commandments of Christ, our peace is as a river.

4. There is an intimate connection between this kingdom and that which is above. "Blessed are they that do his commandments; that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter through the gates into the city."

SERMON LXX.—*God would have all Men to be saved.*

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” 1 Timothy ii, 4.

BENEVOLENCE is a distinguishing feature of the Gospel, which bears an aspect of mildness and compassion to every man. And it transfuses its spirit into the hearts of all who understand it, and submit to its influence. The true Christian must, therefore, be a man of universal and unbounded charity.

This disposition is founded upon two great principles which are recognized by Christianity,—that we are all the children of an equal, creating love; and all redeemed by the same Divine sacrifice. The first of these principles is denied by some of the heathen systems; the Brahminical in particular. With them men are essentially, and in their elementary principles, distinct; some superior, and others inferior; some expressly made by the Creator to suffer and to serve, and others to enjoy and to command. Whereas universal benevolence is laid in the principle, that “God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth.”

The second principle to which we have adverted is still more forcible. The apostle, therefore, argues from this to the duty of praying for all men; and consequently, to that of loving them. “I exhort, therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority: that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour: who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” So extensive is that benevolence which results from the redemption of mankind, that kings and subordinate rulers are specially singled out to be prayed for, not only to enforce the truly Christian duty of praying for them in general, but principally because they were the greatest enemies of the Christians, whom they persecuted with murderous severity. Yet even these are to be loved and prayed for, because they are among those for whom Christ gave himself a ransom.

Important, however, as is this doctrine of universal charity, we shall at present chiefly regard the great principle upon which the apostle inculcates it. “Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.” It is not only the foundation of an important duty,—that of praying for all men,—but of our best hopes and comfort in respect of our own salvation.

The text contains two propositions,—first, that God willeth all men to be saved; and, secondly, that he willeth all men to come to the knowledge of the truth, as the means to that end. These propositions may suggest to us some important thoughts and reflections.

Let me call your attention,

I. To the appellation given by the apostle to the Gospel: it is "the truth."

The unhesitating manner in which the founders of Christianity apply this epithet to the religious system they were charged to unfold to the world is a circumstance not to be passed over in silence. Had they been conscious of the absence of inspiration, and that the Christian code of doctrine had been an invention of their own, it would have been insufferable arrogance in them to have dignified it with the appellation of "the truth." If the sages of Greece and Rome had met with difficulties so formidable in their researches into morals; if they—the brightest geniuses and the most patient students—had declared that on many important subjects truth was not to be found, that it lay too deep for the compass of the human mind; what was there in the fishermen of Galilee to command a success which had eluded the investigations of keener minds? what in the school of Gamaliel, where Saul was educated, to outreach the efforts of the more celebrated schools of wisdom in the most polished states of the ancient world?

The confidence with which they spoke is to be attributed to another cause; and by that cause it is justified. They knew that this system was "the truth," because they knew that it came from God. The heathen sages had reason, which was dark and beclouded, because it was only the reason of fallen creatures. The apostles had revelation, the mind of the Spirit, who searches the deep things of God. The Gospel which they preached had the evidence of the old revelation of the law; for its principles were seen pictured in the hieroglyphics of the tabernacle. It had the evidence of the prophets; for they had jointly testified of Christ, his sufferings, his glory, his doctrines, in language of easy interpretation. They had the evidence of miracles wrought by Jesus himself, in confirmation of his mission, and which they themselves had seen. They themselves had the power, by invoking the name of the Crucified, to work miracles also, and thus to prove that Jesus was ascended, and that they spoke by his authority. They had, what was not the least satisfactory, the evidence of the truth of their religion in their own experience; for they had felt the Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation. With an evidence, therefore, so demonstrative, they spoke, like their Master, as persons having authority. That which was not a matter of doubtfulness to their minds could not induce an expression of doubtfulness from their lips. To the world they published the Gospel as the truth, the truth of God; and commanded, and by their writings do still command, an obedience of faith to it from all persons, on penalty of the everlasting displeasure of its Author.

But by designating the Gospel "the truth," the apostle not only proclaims its divinity, and consequent infallibility, but also calls the attention of men to it as a system of the utmost importance to them, and bound up with their best interests. It is represented in the text as truth which relates to salvation. God willeth all men to be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth. It is this circumstance which strikes so deep an interest into our religion, and distinguishes it as "the truth," by way of eminence. All truth is not interesting to man; or, at least, every other truth is but partially so. It concerns the mass of mankind little, that in the present age philosophical truth

is better known, and more clearly demonstrated, than it formerly was. Whether the earth be round or flat, whether it moves or stands still, are questions of small consequence to the majority of mankind; and even the truths which are of general import—such as the principles of law, good government, and useful arts and sciences—have their value and application bounded by the body and by time. They affect not the state of the soul in its relations to God, nor extend their benefits beyond the grave. But the truth of the Gospel relates to the soul and eternity. It is contained in “words by which we may be saved.” A very general view of the contents of the system is sufficient to show how greatly it differs from every thing else that can claim the venerable name of truth, and how fully it is adapted to our condition. It lays open the source of our miseries,—our apostasy from God. It presents to us our Maker in the only character in which he can stand to guilty men,—a Being offended and incensed by our crimes. It shows us the true propitiation,—the blood of a Divine sacrifice. It exhibits the terms of man’s acceptance,—his deep humiliation of soul, and his faith in the merits and intercession of the appointed Redeemer. It has promises for man’s encouragement, warnings for his caution, precepts for his direction. It proclaims him immortal; teaches him that he is on his trial; sets before him the solemnities of the general judgment; and carries his hopes and fears into their highest exercise, and renders them of the best possible service to him, by opening to him the penalties of eternal destruction, and the glories of endless felicity.

This is “the truth,” for which we are indebted to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and which is proposed to our attention, and practice, and enjoyment, in the Gospel.

II. We observe in the text, that the knowledge of this truth is connected with salvation, as a means to an end; and connected, too, by no less an authority than the will of God.

He that willeth “all men to be saved” willeth them also “to come to the knowledge of the truth;” and from this the inference is irresistible, that the knowledge of the truth is essential to salvation.

This subject deserves our serious attention; and there are two questions which arise out of it,—What degree of that truth is necessary to be known in order to salvation; and how it must be known.

The first question presents a point of necessary discussion; because if it were meant that, before a person could be saved, he should have a complete and accurate knowledge of all the truths of the Gospel, every one would be excluded from the benefit. The whole truth of God takes in a range far too ample for the capacity of man in his present state; and the simplest truths stand connected with the deepest mysteries. Is it for us to explore the manner in which the Divinity is united to the human nature in the person of Jesus Christ, and in which God was manifest in the flesh? the reasons why justice could not be honoured, and mercy at liberty to fulfil her purposes, without the sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God? Thousands of questions have been raised on the various doctrines contained in revelation, which the best and wisest of men, after the most laborious application, have not been able to answer: and the reason is obvious. The truths revealed are the revelations of an infinite mind, and partake of its infinity. They

relate to spiritual operations of which we know little ; and to a future state, of which we practically know nothing. For this reason the Gospel must ever present something more to be known, as well as to be experienced ; and it is to be the subject of developement for ever. This is its perfection. But there are considerations which prove that a perfect knowledge of every part of the truth is not essential to mere salvation. Hence it is that divines have divided the truths of the Gospel into two classes,—those which are essential, and those which are non-essential. The distinction is just. There are truths which it is necessary we should know in order that we may be saved. This is a delicate subject ; for we are apt to attach such an importance to our opinions as to consider them essential, merely because they have made an undue impression upon our own minds. We shall not, however, go far wrong in determining this important question, if we adhere to the written word.

The best way of determining what is essential for us to know, is to consider what is essential to faith. It is said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Whatever, therefore, is essential for us to know, in order that we may believe, must be essential for us to know in order that we may be saved. In order to faith we must know the purity of the Divine law in such a degree as shall convince us that we have violated it, and incurred the penalty of its maledictory sanction. We must know our inability to make atonement ; for without this the undertaking of Christ is vain in respect to us. We must know so much of the evidence of Christ’s mission as to receive him as the divinely-appointed Redeemer. We must know his meritorious death to be so satisfactory to the offended Deity, that for the sake of that he will impute our faith for justification. We must know the provisions made in the promises for supplying us with the help of the Holy Spirit for the renewing of our nature, and the support and comfort of our minds ; and we must know the precepts of the Gospel law, by which our minds and lives may be regulated according to the will of God.

Without knowledge of this extent, no man can believe in Christ ; and consequently, without the knowledge of these truths, no man who has the opportunity of knowing them can be saved.

This knowledge is necessary for mere salvation ; but we are far from saying that a higher degree of knowledge is useless. A higher degree of knowledge is, indeed, necessary, in order to a confirmed faith ; to enable us to meet and answer the objections by which we may be assailed ; to qualify us to instruct the ignorant ; to be a means of carrying us up to high attainments in religion ; and to prepare us for extensive usefulness in the Church.

The second question, how the truth must be known, in order that we may be saved, seems to be answered in the phrase, “Come to the knowledge of the truth.”

This knowledge supposes curiosity to know the truth. It is lamentable that there is so little of this among men. In many instances truth is never thought of. Many people are as ignorant of it as they were when they were children ; and, indeed, when they are far advanced in life, know less than they had learned from their catechism. And yet the truth is not a vain thing. It is their life.

This knowledge supposes the admission of truth into the understanding, and its influence upon the practice. Some men shrink back from this knowledge. They will not come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd. Whatever it cost us, we must know the truth, that we may walk by it, and be saved by its instrumentality. The natural levity and folly of the mind ought to be laid aside, and the whole attention directed to the acquisition of saving knowledge. While every means is employed in order to this end, earnest prayer should be offered to the Father of lights for the guidance and aid of his Holy Spirit; and so shall we be made wise unto salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The text presents us with an interesting view of the connection of the Divine will with the salvation of man: "Who will have all men to be saved."

1. The object of this will is the salvation of man.

This has already been alluded to, but deserves a more distinct consideration. It is this which so gloriously displays the benevolence of God by the Gospel. Man has placed himself in circumstances of ruin, and God wills his recovery. He has forfeited the privileges and hopes of an innocent creature; and God wills his restoration. All lies expressed in the word salvation. Though a negative term, it bears an infinite import. It has the sense of deliverance; deliverance from the natural darkness of the mind, the painful sense of guilt upon the conscience, the force of evil habit, the burden of corruption. It imports succour in our trials, freedom from the fear of death, and a rescue from the horrors of hell. But, as used in Scripture, the word salvation has a positive sense. It denotes all the communications of grace, and the administration of glory; the peace which passeth understanding; the transforming of the soul after the pattern of the mind of Christ; the access of our spirits to God in prayer; the communion of a human heart with God; the dwelling of God in a temple of consecrated humanity; the triumphant risings of the soul above the troubles of life, and the terrors of the tomb; the public approval of the saint at the day of Christ; the glorification of the whole man in heaven; and all the glory comprehended in the vision of God: this is the salvation which God wills you to receive. We learn,

2. That in the same sense he willeth all men to be saved.

That this is Scripture doctrine, and that the word "all" is to be taken in its most extensive sense, scarcely any other argument is necessary to prove, than that of the apostle in the context. He does not attempt to prove that Christ died for all; but lays down this principle, as a thing acknowledged, and never questioned among Christians of that age, and argues from it the duty of prayer for all men. Christ "gave himself a ransom for all;" "there is one Mediator between God and man;" God "willeth all men to be saved." These are his premises; and his conclusion is, that therefore Christians ought to seek the salvation of all men by praying for them. It is a feeble criticism to say, that the apostle meant by the expression "all men," all ranks of men; for that is the same thing. "All ranks of men" are "all men." If it be contended that he meant by this expression, some of all ranks; then we have the human word "some,"

for the Divine word "all." One passage is sufficient to fix the meaning of the word "all," as used by the apostle, with reference to the extent of Christ's death. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again," 2 Cor. v, 14, 15. Here the remedy is declared to be as extensive as the disease. Among those who acknowledge the corruption of human nature, as the consequence of the original transgression, no doubt has ever been expressed as to the extent of that corruption. All were dead in sin, as descendants from the first Adam; and for all who were thus dead, the apostle declares that Christ has died.

This is an encouraging doctrine. If Christ died for all men, in the proper sense of that expression, then you are not excepted. The worst are not excepted. We are authorized to preach the Gospel of salvation to every one of you; and you may all reflect with joy upon the cheering fact, that he bore your sins in his own body upon the tree. But,

3. The mode in which the Divine will is connected with human salvation remains to be considered.

It is a natural question, "If God willeth all men to be saved, why is it that any perish?" The answer is, If God willed to save men by overcoming their wills by his omnipotent influence, all men must be saved; but he wills to save them according to the nature which he has given them; and we have the evidence of his word, and of our own consciousness, that his will is a resistible will, and that his willing us to be saved does not effect our salvation without a corresponding determination of our own will. The principal opinions on this subject are these:—

Some persons have considered man, when under the gracious influence of God exerted upon him in order to his salvation, as wholly passive, and carried by irresistible force into a new condition. But if this be the case, then man is a machine; he can commit no sin, do no vicious act; and is not rewardable or punishable, any more than a stone is punishable for falling to the ground. These doctrines are so absurd and dangerous, that the religious part of the world which once held them have grown ashamed of them.

Another opinion therefore is, that the will is necessarily influenced in its determinations by motives of good and evil discovered to the understanding; and that in the case of those who are saved, such motives as must command the assent of the will are impressed by God upon the mind; and thus it is supposed that the person so operated upon is infallibly brought into a state of salvation without any violence to his free agency. If, however, God willed all men to be saved, and proceeded in this way to the execution of his purpose, their salvation would be as certain as if they were machines. The doctrine is the same, though cloaked with a metaphysical garb. The mind is still a machine, though a spiritual one, and moved by the force of instruments suited to its nature; I mean, by what are called motives. Experience, however, decides against this opinion. The will is not invincibly influenced by motives; that is, a motive to good does not always produce a volition of obedience to the will of God. Every one

feels that he has willed and acted in opposition to such motives, and deliberately and knowingly chosen the wrong, with the certainty impressed upon his mind of the loss of the highest good, and the danger of the greatest evil. There is a perversity, a wickedness in the human heart, which often prevents the will from following the direction of the best motives.

The opposite extreme to these opinions is, that man has a natural power to discern the right, and to choose it, independent of a Divine agency exerted upon his mind. This opinion needs no disproving to those who cordially believe the Holy Scriptures; and we proceed, therefore, to that view of the respective parts taken by God, and assigned to man, in the work of salvation, which is warranted by Scripture, and confirmed by experience.

Had man been left without any supernatural aids, he must have been as blind to discern what is good, as he was unable to choose it. With the offers of mercy which have been made to him, he has had communicated to him the power to accept of them; as is plain from the fact, that he is invited to come to Christ, and is reprovèd for not coming to him. Power, however, is not action. The difference is made plain by a familiar instance. We have power to walk; but we may sit still. The free use and application of this power is that which constitutes man accountable. If this be interfered with, man becomes the passive agent of another. His actions are no longer his own. To make them his own, there must be a self-determining power; and in this sense

“Man is the maker of immortal fates.”

He holds in his own hands the balance on which life or death is to turn. If it be said that this makes man the author of his own salvation; we reply, that, upon this hypothesis, the sinner is no more the author of his own salvation, than the man's stretching out his withered hand at the command of Christ made him the author of his own cure. It makes him do something in order to his own salvation; and this is the constant doctrine of Scripture.

The plain facts before us then are, God willeth our salvation; he has appointed effectual means to this end; he has given us all the power to use these means; and to the use of them he has promised his blessing. Whether we will actually “come to the knowledge of the truth,” or not, is left ultimately with ourselves; but whether we will hear the voice of God, or whether we will forbear, we have motives, exhortations, promises; all that can move upon our fear, our love, our interest.

To apply these motives is a part of our ministry. We are made ambassadors for Christ, to persuade you to be reconciled to God. O how many of you have hitherto resisted that will of your gracious God, which has for its object your salvation! And will you persist in rejecting his counsel against yourselves? What account will you give in the day of the Lord? And how can you endure, through everlasting ages, the deep and overwhelming conviction, that you forfeited the joys of salvation, and exposed yourselves to the torments of hell, by your own wilful folly and sin?

Some of you, I trust, are engaged in the pursuit of salvation; and are anxiously inquiring what you must do to obtain it. It is no won-

der that the fearful magnitude and number of your offences inspire you with alarm; and that the sight of them is sometimes ready to overwhelm you in despair. This, however, is certain, that the will of God concerning you is your salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." By the instrumentality of Divine truth your salvation is to be effected. Study that truth. Apply it to your hearts and lives. And as it is in the same manner that others are to be saved, assist in the spread of evangelical truth to the ends of the earth, that all the fallen race may hear the joyful sound, and be saved.

SERMON LXXI.—*Little Faith Reproved.*

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Matthew xiv, 31.

THE history with which this passage is connected, like many of the parables, is designed to teach us the necessity of faith; not indeed of miraculous faith, but of that which is of more importance to the Christian, and produces more glorious effects. Wherever Christ calls us, and bids us come, though into a sea of conflicts and troubles, we are to obey; and into whatever circumstances he leads us, we are to maintain an unwavering confidence in him, that he will not forsake us.

On these topics we might profitably dwell; but my present design is more general. I shall make use of my text to point out to you,

I. The evil, and,

II. The unreasonableness, of religious doubting.

I. The evil of religious doubting.

Viewing the subject very generally, we might observe that the evil is seen in men not religious; who are not, as Peter, disciples and followers of Christ. The spiritual death and indifference we see about us may chiefly be traced to this source. Some men doubt as to religion in general. The flying sophisms and sneers of the infidel or semi-infidel writers and talkers have their secret, silent impressions; and the evil is, that, as truth not admitted loses its power, we surround the sun with mists and clouds, and its vivifying influences are not felt. How much a bad state of heart has to do with this may be easily demonstrated. You pretend you want evidence; yet with one thousandth part of the evidence as to other things, you would fly from danger, or seek a worldly good, with all your heart. But one way of accounting for this is, that your hearts are in the one and averse to the other. One you wish to be true; the other you wish not to be true. But where no doctrinal doubt is defined or allowed even to the mind, the secret doubt is conveyed by a "heart of unbelief." The reality of danger, the severity of God's law, the necessity of conversion; all these are at once allowed and doubted. A certain proof this, that it is the property of a corrupt heart to disbelieve, even in opposition to the intellect. If you believed as fully that you were in danger as to the body, as intellectually you do as to the soul, what efforts you would make! Now you make none. A spirit of slumber, a benumbing influence, has seized you; for you remain in sin and the world. These are cases

which I merely mention, but do not dwell upon. My text refers not to doubting unbelievers, but to doubting disciples. Doubts as to the power, love, and faithfulness, even of their Master, are apt to arise in their minds; and under them they sink. The evil of doubting, in such persons, is our immediate subject. The evil is of two kinds.

1. It is an evil considered as an injury.

You have had faith giving comfortable persuasion of the Divine favour: you doubt, and your joys wither. You have victory over evil: you doubt as to complete victory; and your efforts after holiness are discouraged. You have had strength for former duties: new and somewhat more difficult ones arise, or perhaps your obligations are the very same: you doubt of help; and you are shorn of your strength. You have had deliverance in spiritual conflicts: you doubt as to those which remain, and say, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." You have been upheld in former troubles: now the wave rises somewhat higher, and the wind becomes more strong, and you begin to be afraid with an unbelieving fear. You have had the faith which has turned from you the sting of death: now you anticipate that hour in your thoughts; doubt whether you shall go through the valley in safety; and your hearts are disquieted within you. You have had a realizing faith in heaven: doubts have arisen; and it is no longer regarded as that house of your Father, that familiar, desired home, which it was wont to be. A more disturbed state of feeling is the consequence. Thus you see the evil of doubting, in the injury which it inflicts. But,

2. It is an evil considered morally.

I know that this state of mind may arise, in part, from infirmity of the flesh, from disease or age. I except these cases. When the case is examined, every thing doubts but the heart; that is sound, it hangs on Christ. And I know how the Lord will treat all such cases. "He knoweth our frame;" and though that frame is a part of our trial, the faith which sustained even this load shall be found unto "praise, and honour, and glory." I bid you "be of good cheer." In other cases doubting has a taint of moral evil. I say not broadly that it is sin, in that sense in which a wilful and deliberate act shuts out the soul from God. But it may lead to it; and it has a sinful quality and origin, and needs the blood of atonement. For look at the true origin of these doubts. They partly spring from the "evil heart of unbelief," which originates all doubt, and all denial of God, in others; they are a stream, though not so copious, from the same corrupt fountain. They often arise from some idea of the necessity of merit and fitness to qualify us for God, which when we cannot see them in ourselves, we dare not bring the naked atonement of Christ, and commit our all to that. They farther proceed from the indulgence of some neglect, which has introduced a slothfulness and insensibility of spirit. They come, too, from neglecting to "watch unto prayer," so that we do not see God, and we lose our familiarity with him. Finally: They issue from the prevalence of earthly affections, so that we begin to care and fear more than is due, and to take the absolute disposal of things out of the hands of God, where faith rests them, believing that he will do all things well. Thus we see a moral evil in doubting, for which we are to be suitably humbled.

II. We are now to consider the unreasonableness of doubting, as suggested in our Lord's reproof, "Wherefore didst thou doubt?"

The question was addressed to a disciple, a sincere though imperfect one, one in friendship with his Master; and it implies that there was no reason to doubt. This does not apply to persons of another character. They have the greatest reason to doubt; and to begin to doubt would be only to begin to awake from delusion. But to the sincere, though imperfect disciple, all doubt in the power, love, and faithfulness of Christ is so unreasonable as to merit the reproof in our text; for reproof it is, though kind. Every thing in Christ reproves doubt.

His greatness reproves it. Peter had seen his power in stupendous miracles: he saw it then; he was walking on the wave; and that ought to have banished doubt. We know his power; for he is God. The world was made and is governed by him. His mighty arm is upon all its movements; his presence is in every place; his power is always in action; from heaven to the depths of the dwellings of demons, one almighty energy is spread. "Is any thing," then, "too hard for the Lord?" "I know that thou canst do every thing." "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" Doubt questions even almighty power.

His official relation to us reproves doubt. These offices are assumed only for us. Holy angels need them not. Fallen angels have no interest in them. For men, for believing men, all are summed up in the grand office of Redeemer from the curse of the law, from sin, from the world, from the power of the enemy, from future misery. If he has power for this, what does doubt suppose? that he will be unfaithful to his office? that he will not redeem? Where is the ground of this? No where. It is doubt without a foundation. It is reproved by his past willingness to redeem you. Why should he begin his work, if he intends not to perfect it?

His love reproves it; love displayed in sufferings and death. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And how did he lay it down? Amidst humiliation, mocking, scorn, and sorrow. Is that a love to be questioned? Every part of the scene reproves thy doubt, every drop of blood, every pang of grief, his last words, "It is finished!" finished for thee. "Wherefore dost thou doubt?"

His unchangeableness reproves it. If reasons for entire affiance in Christ ever existed, they exist now; for mark that great ground of faith, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Set his personal history before you; and ask whether there would have been any reason to doubt, had you lived when he was manifest in the flesh. Suppose you had marked his sympathy with all distressed persons, his condescension to the poor, his diligent teaching, his ready forgiveness of sins, his compassion to the infirmities of his disciples, his universal invitations, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," would you have had reason to doubt? All that he was he is now; for with him is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "Wherefore dost thou doubt?"

His work now in the world reproves it. I see several striking facts. Christianity yet exists. It is kept by miracle in the world, that it

might reach me. I see an inspired book full of promises. I see a ministry of the Gospel. I see ordinances, the object of which is to bring me and him together ; for which purpose he is in the midst of his worshippers. I feel the Spirit, a Divine influence, all-saving. All these most gracious and wonderful arrangements display a tender and ceaseless interest in the salvation and happiness of men ; in your salvation and mine. "Wherefore dost thou doubt?"

Lastly. I take experience. Go to the saints who have doubted, but are now established in the faith. I ask, whether they ever had reason to doubt. Go to the redeemed in heaven. They once had doubts. Ask them, whether they had any reason for them ; and their waving palms and songs of victory—victory obtained through the blood of the Lamb—shall give the answer. And ask thyself, "Wherefore dost thou doubt?" Thou wast remembered in thy low estate. Thou wast awakened, justified, renewed, made happy in God, without money and without price. Wherefore dost thou doubt of his willingness to save thee to the end?

Conclusion.

Have faith in God. In order to this remember,

1. It is the gift of God. Pray, then, that the Holy Ghost may produce it in you ; and that, having produced it, he may strengthen and perfect it.

2. It is to be exercised. Repose, then, an absolute trust in God your Saviour. Confide in his veracity, and power, and love. Say with Job, under all the vicissitudes of life, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

3. You are to look only to him, when you are sure you have his promise. Christ is all, and in all. Look not at the water upon which you tread, but to him who walks upon it. Hear not the wind, but him who can rebuke it. Or, if a doubt arise, and thou sink, make thy appeal to him, "Lord, save me!" and he will stretch forth his hand, and say, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

SERMON LXXII.—*Victory over Sin, Death, and the Grave.*

"The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv, 56, 57.

THE subject of this chapter is the glorious doctrine of the resurrection ; a doctrine so peculiarly Christian, and so interesting to all, that the apostle might well speak of it in those lofty strains which mark this striking portion of the New Testament. His words dissipate the darkness of the grave, open breaks of light into the glory of the future state, and show us the termination of the wondrous work of our redemption, by crowning the redeemed creature with "honour and immortality." Well might his spirit glow on such a subject. These interests, these hopes, he knew to be his own, and those of all true Christians ; and he leaves the subject with the accents of victory on

his lips, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Do we wish to partake of this triumph? Who does not? Then let us enter into the import of the terms in which it is expressed; for they will teach us the only, but the sure and immutable ground on which it rests. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." Over these—sin, and the strength of sin—Christ giveth us the victory; and thus we have victory over death and the grave. This is the doctrine; and we proceed to illustrate it.

I. "The sting of death is sin."

The meaning of the apostle is, that, to a man conscious of unpardoned and unpurged sin, death is armed with a peculiar pungency of dread and horror. And here he refers, not so much to that natural dread of suffering and death, which all may occasionally feel, as to that which is produced by a sense of guilt, and a painful apprehension of punishment. This is an important distinction. Could we suppose a perfectly innocent being liable to death, as we are, and without any apprehensions as to the future; yet, to be liable to sudden interruption in his plans, to a separation from beloved friends and relations, to the pangs of disease, and the pains of dissolution, must necessarily invest death with characters, repulsive, ghastly, and fearful. Here, however, would be no "sting," no inward biting of remorse, no rankling anticipations of evil beyond, no sense of the frown of God. These constitute what the apostle calls death's "sting." It is felt, more or less, by every sinful man; and it is felt most by him who is most aware of the sad truth and reality of his condition. If men succeed in blunting its point, that is but through a delusion which makes their case the more hopeless; and it is but temporary. There is a sharp and envenomed sting in death, to every man who, having judgment and conscience, is yet surprised by it without preparation; for sin is the sting of death. Consider, then, what there is in the circumstances of a sinful man about to die, which arms death with this fearful power to sting and torture.

1. The first circumstance is the loss of the world.

The case before us is that of a sinful man, whose only portion is on earth, and who has no hope of good in another world. To him the loss he sustains is absolute. Has he been a man of pleasure? His pleasures vanish, and the bitter remembrance only remains. Has he been a man of taste and imagination? He shall no longer enjoy the sentimental pleasures of grandeur, beauty, and harmony; for he has not enjoyed them in God. Is he a man eager in his pursuit of wealth? His plans are broken; and he knows that in the moment God requires his soul, his wealth must go to others. Has he ranked among the proud and mighty of the earth? The grave which opens for him knows no distinction. There the servant is as his master; and the dead, who have gone before, wait to mock him at his coming, as in Isaiah xiv, 10, saying "Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?" When these thoughts pass through the mind sickening at the sight of the grave, how they sting! "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided," and for which the soul was neglected, and salvation slighted?

2. A second circumstance which renders sin the sting of death is, that, on the approach of death, it is presented to the awakened conscience under its true aspect.

The nature of sin is to deceive. It assumes the forms of pleasure, interest, credit, nay, sometimes of virtue ; and, like its parent, Satan, transforms itself into an "angel of light." But when death approaches, opens the veil of futurity, and lets in the light, the searching light of eternity, all these false appearances are dissipated ; and sin then appears capable only of comparison with itself, "exceeding sinful." The number of sins, before thought few, is now innumerable. Memory opens her secret stores, proves terribly tenacious ; and the dying sinner exclaims, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up ; they are more than the hairs of mine head ; therefore my heart faileth me." Their aggravations, before thought little, now appear great ; sins against light, mercy, warning, conviction, resolutions, appear in all their enormity. The conviction of all these overt acts, with the character of them, is felt. That character, which before was palliated, is now all traced to the principles of sins in the heart, every one springing from some corresponding principle of a bad nature. Then the heart, for the first time, opens ; and, "Behold, I am vile," is the sad language which is now sighed forth. Here is the "sting." The man is unfit for a holy heaven, and must, if no mercy intervene, be thrust out as an "abominable thing."

3. A third circumstance which renders sin the sting of death is, that it renders terrible that presence of God, into which, after death, the soul must immediately enter.

If the sinner could be hidden in the grave, and his soul, as well as his body, return to unconscious dust, comparatively, this would be well. To fly from the presence of God is the effort of an awakened soul : so, in the Revelation vi, 16, 17, the cry is, "Rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ?" In convulsions of nature, men would fly from the reeling mountains, and the falling rock : here they fly to meet the ruin ; because there is an object more terrible,—the face of "Him that sitteth upon the throne." It is this that the sinner dreads in death ; and well he may ; for all that is in God is against him. His holiness,—intense as that "firmament" of the "colour of the terrible crystal" over the heads of the cherubim, in the prophet's vision,—his justice, his majesty, his power, his eternity, nay, each person of the trinity, will give rise to the bitterest feelings. Is he in the presence of the Father ? He has refused his calls, and slighted the love which gave his own Son to save him. Is he in the presence of the Son ? Will he not then remember the "agony and bloody sweat," his pleadings, his ambassadors, and the base returns which he has made for that generous love which died in his stead ? And will he not be filled with horror at his ingratitude ? Is he in the presence of the Holy Spirit, "grieved" often, and now for ever "quenched ?" These reflections will point the sting, and keep it pointed for ever.

4. A fourth circumstance is the banishment of the soul from God till the judgment.

Whither shall he go ? Ah ! well he knows. The place is described.

It is a prison ; for that is understood by the phrase, "everlasting chains under darkness," Jude 6. The society are, the wicked ; the state, that of torment. Then "cometh the judgment ;" public arraignment, and final condemnation.

These are the facts of the case ; these, the circumstances of every man dying in his sins. And when the mind is fully awakened to them, how truly you perceive that the apostle has not used language too strong, when he calls sin "the sting of death !" You see, you feel, it must be so, in a degree which you cannot fully apprehend, and which God grant you never may !

But this is not the whole case. We learn,

II. That "the strength of sin is the law." That which points the sting of death is sin ; that which gives to sin this power and strength is the law.

The expression does not mean that the law is the cause of sin. It is "holy." It restrains us by promises and threatenings. But when sin is once committed, then the law gives to sin its punitive power, and renders it the cause of eternal misery. So we have shown you, that, were we innocent, death might be awful, but could not be dreadful. But when sin comes in, it is the "transgression of the law ;" and from thence it derives its power to arm death with its envenomed sting. The law is "the strength of sin."

1. Because it is that which connects the penalty of death with sin.

"Where no law is, there is no transgression." The same acts which would be harmless as to another world, had there been no law, now, since we are "under law," and know we are under law, have a very different character. They violate God's holy law ; and against every one the malediction lies.

2. In proportion as the law is manifested, sin is aggravated ; and, therefore, its condemning power is increased.

"The law entered, that the offence might abound ;" not that men might sin, but see the abounding of their sins. If we be not saved from them, then, in proportion to the manifestation of the law, is our offence. What strength, then, has sin to condemn in our day ! The law was manifested to the patriarchs, more clearly to the Jews, most clearly to us, by the teaching of Christ and his apostles ; and hence our guilt is aggravated beyond all previous example. Whatever is wrong, we know. In our case sin "abounds unto death."

3. The "law is the strength of sin," because its rigour is never abated.

If, then, the only remedy of the Gospel be slighted, we are left wholly to a law which never, never relaxes. It cannot relax. That is impossible, because of its three perfections. It is "holy, just, and good." If "holy," it can never sanction unholiness ; if "just," it must demand the penalty ; if "good," or benevolent, it must be enforced ; for it is mercy to the whole creation to punish offenders.

4. The law is the strength of sin, because it is eternal.

The subjects of its government are immortal. They can never die. They will always be under this law, which has no remedy for their sin, and yet eternally enforces its own penalty.

You have now the whole case. Say, then, in these views, what strength, what tremendous power, must sin appear to have to an awa-

kened, dying sinner! Sins innumerable rise up from the recesses of the memory. Death is present; sin is behind; the law is behind that, denouncing, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die:" that law relaxing nothing, that fearful law, fixed and steadfast to all eternity. Do you say, "What terrible things are these!" They are terrible. My heart almost fails me while I utter them. But they are not inventions of mine. They are in this inspired text, this word of God. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." Thank God I have not to leave you thus. My text speaks of victory, and a victory which you all may share. And this leads us to the consideration,

III. Of the Christian's victory. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Here are two things to be noted.

1. The means by which the victory is made possible; "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This work of Christ—for which let his name be ever blessed!—had several parts, all essentially connected, all grand manifestations of compassion and love.

His incarnation. What he was to do was for us, and in our stead. It was therefore necessary for him to assume our nature; to be one of us; to represent us.

His sacrificial death. He came to take the penalty of our sin; to magnify the law, and redeem us from its curse. Hence he died as our substitute.

His resurrection. He rose to plead his death in our behalf.

The effusion of the Spirit. He gives the Spirit to awaken us to a sense of our condition; to lead us to himself; and cure the plague of sin, the sting of death, in our consciences.

To open the way to the holy places, that, through death, we might pass into them.

And to be the judge of quick and dead, that, at the resurrection, he might claim his own people, and glorify them for ever with himself.

Yet glorious as this is, even this gives us not the victory. If Christ be neglected and slighted, this but heightens the guilt, and envenoms the sting. There is, then,

2. A victory for us. How do we obtain it? The offer is made to an awakened sinner. He sees his case. He has sinned. The law holds him fast. The first and second death are both before him. Whither shall he fly? To his Saviour. Mark, then, the process of victory. Faith in the atonement secures him deliverance from the curse of the law. He is justified by believing. Who shall lay any thing to his charge? The sense of pardon takes away the sense of guilt. The sting is gone. The spirit of bondage gives place to the Spirit of adoption. Sin itself is conquered in its power and pollution. He is dead to it; he is divorced from it. Behold, then, his victory over death and the grave!

Over death. He, too, must die. He has a natural awe, and a shrinking from it; but it comes. Yet it has no sting; for he is saved from sin. The law can give no strength to his past offences; for its penalty has been exacted. They may rise in his remembrance, and be causes of humiliation; but their strength is taken away: they cannot raise a guilty fear; they cannot inflict a punitive wound. He holds

fast his faith; and they pass away. He is at peace with God; and in another world, as well as in the present, he shall be at peace with him. That world is the world of which his Redeemer is the Lord; and it is peopled with his very friends, who have preceded him in his triumph. This is victory, to vanquish fear by faith, and to live in death itself. "O death, where is thy sting?"

Over the grave; for the apostle challenges the grave: "Where is thy victory?" It has had its victory; and there is something highly emphatic in the term, as applied to the grave. Noiseless and insignificant an object as it appears, it claims triumphs which the vanity of the proudest conquerors never even affected. Its victory has been nearly universal. With three exceptions, it holds the whole race of Adam; and yawns for the generations yet unborn. It triumphs over the strength of man. No human power can afford the rescue, or turn the tide which sets in toward that all-absorbing gulf. It triumphs over the art of man; and mocks the devices of the physician, who is a dying man himself, while he is employed in giving life to others. It triumphs over the conditions of men. The sovereign and the subject lie undistinguished in its dust: it inflicts on both an equal humiliation. It triumphs over the pleasures of men. "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave." It triumphs over the cares of men. All is silent there. And, finally, it triumphs over the tenderest relations. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness,"—the darkness of the grave. Yet upon the brink of the all-devouring grave itself may the Christian stand, and shout, "O grave, where is thy victory?" It has been once conquered,—on the illustrious morning of our Lord's resurrection. Its key was taken into his hand. It holds the dust of his saints but as a deposit; and it shall yield them up at his call. "Thou shalt call," says Job, "and I will answer thee," even in the grave. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust," shall be the sweet and awakening sound, which every saint shall hear; and when all shall have arisen from dust and death to life and immortality, then the song of anticipated conquest shall be turned to the shout of actual triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

I set before you the two scenes; a happy and a wretched death. Which will you choose? May God give you a wise and an understanding heart, that you may know, in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace, before they are for ever hid from your eyes!

SERMON LXXIII.—*Secret Prayer.*

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly," Matthew vi, 6.

OUR Lord appeared when there was much of the "form of godliness," but when its "power" was unfelt and denied. The scribes and Pharisees loved to perform in public those devotions which were be-

tween themselves and God. It is absurd, as well as wicked, to make a boast of praying,—the very act which supplies the humbling considerations, that we are sinful, poor, and dependent. Such ostentatious worshippers “have their reward” in the praise of foolish people; but they have nothing beyond this, either in spiritual blessings here, or in eternity. This is the doom of the formalist.

In bringing the subject of private prayer before you, I direct your attention,

I. To some general truths which the duty supposes.

1. Religion is a personal thing.

Our collective character, our knowledge, zeal, good report, as belonging to the universal Church, or some particular portion of it, are not sufficient for us either in regard to our happiness or our safety. The very act of prayer supposes something personal between God and me. My sins are to be confessed, and to be pardoned; my nature is to be renewed; my wants are to be supplied. Never let me forget to ask, “What am I before God?” Am I a pardoned man? a renewed man; a helped man? a man under the influence of God? or am I walking according to the course of this world, and filling up the measure of my iniquities?

2. We are forcibly reminded that God is every where.

We had not known this doctrine, in any view, but for religion. God was a local deity to the heathen. But we are not to consider his omnipresence as an extension and diffusion of the Divine nature, so that he is only partially in any particular place. God is in thy closet. He “seeth in secret” as much as any where; as much as in heaven itself, where he reigns in his full perfection. Let us every where then “sanctify him in our hearts.”

3. That his regard to us is particular.

The doctrine of a particular providence is a glorious doctrine. It is here joined with particular grace. God not only regards the Church collectively, not only guides, guards, blesses that; but here, in the closet, he communes from the mercy seat, and receives the case of every individual. O wondrous doctrine! Yet so it is. God enters into my case, sinful, insignificant, mean, helpless, and unworthy as I am.

II. I offer you some observations upon the duty of private prayer itself.

1. It must be frequent.

Consider the examples of the Old Testament saints. These were supposed to be known by those persons whom our Lord addressed; at least the examples of morning and evening prayer were familiar to their minds. The circumstances of those seasons are peculiar; and no one can have the spirit of devotion who does not regard them. But we ought to engage in prayer also during the day; because in the heat of worldliness we need special assistance; and as much oftener as we feel spiritual languor or danger. “Seven times a day do I praise thee,” says David; that is, many times a day.

2. There must be considerateness in the performance of this duty.

We acknowledge this when we go into the house of God; and we ought not less to acknowledge it in the closet: God is as fully there. We have some solemn transactions with him,—sins to confess, mer-

cies to acknowledge, evils to deprecate, wants to be supplied. God, the great and eternal God, is near to all them that call upon him.

3. It must be full and free; a "pouring out of the heart."

There seems to be no reason for the institution of private prayer, but that we might be more particular in it than we could be in any public act, or than it would be proper to be in the presence of other people. In private prayer there ought to be an enumeration of sins, of mercies, of wants, of persons in whom we have an interest, of cases peculiar to ourselves.

4. It must be confidential.

It is, eminently, a confidential intercourse with God. Our Father is in secret. Does he enter into our case as no one else would or could? O then let us rely absolutely upon his power and grace!

We proceed to consider,

III. The promise: "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

Secret prayer is not designed to raise a transient emotion, or lighten care by a communication of it to another; but to yield a benefit which shall appear in experience, and in the daily walks of life.

What do you wish, if you are a Christian?

1. To maintain the serious, watchful spirit? He will reward you thus; and your profiting shall appear unto all.

2. To conquer in conflict, and more than conquer, which we ought all to aim at? He will grant this.

3. To be invigorated in duty; that it may be cheerful, full, persevering; that ye may have ability for the discharge of it? This also he will give.

4. To suffer according to the will of God? This is honourable to his religion. He will grant this.

5. To die well. This also he will vouchsafe, in answer to fervent, believing, and persevering prayer.

In conclusion,

1. If you have not been "rewarded openly," may you not trace this to a neglect of secret prayer, or to faintness in it? "You have not, because you ask not; or you ask and receive not, because you ask amiss."

2. Remember that the only end of your closet prayer is to receive; to press into the manifested presence of God, that he may "shine forth" upon you, and supply all you need. Keep this end continually in view, and O be satisfied with nothing less!

SERMON LXXIV.—*Abraham's Faith and Pilgrimage.*

"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles," (or tents,) Hebrews xi, 9.

THE end for which the apostle introduced those instances of the faith of the ancient saints, with which this chapter is crowded, was to confirm the Hebrews in their faith, and to embolden them to suffer, and even to die, rather than "cast it away." He could not, therefore,

overlook Abraham. Among the examples of ancient faith, Abraham stood foremost. He was "the father of the faithful;" the spiritual progenitor of the myriads of believers to the end of time. His faith is the pattern of theirs; so that all who believe tread in the steps of the faith of their father Abraham. For instances of his faith are recorded: his going out at God's call; his sojourning, as a stranger, in the land of promise; his faith in the promises relative to the birth of Isaac and the Messiah; and the faith called for by the command to offer up Isaac. Each might deserve a distinct consideration; but we can only now observe that they rise each above the others, till the whole principle is exhibited in all its nobleness and majesty, as that which

"Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, It shall be done!"

because "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

That instance which I have now selected exhibits faith in the important view of it, as the antagonist of earthliness; as extinguishing the worldly spirit. Among the great types set up in the patriarchal age, where men were taught, by sensible symbols, some of the most important truths afterward to be revealed, was the land of Canaan. Enoch's translation was a sensible representation of the taking up of glorified saints, to "be for ever with the Lord." Noah's deliverance in the ark was a "figure" whereunto the antitype "baptism doth also now save us." Melchizedec was a type of our High Priest. Abraham's justification was a pattern of ours.

We do not here follow fancy. We are not allowed to make types, because we can find resemblances. This is the fault of many writers. But where the New Testament has marked them out, we are there to follow the suggestion, and interpret them by that light which it affords. On this authority, we are to regard the land of Canaan as an instituted type of the heavenly state. It was the place where the Israelites were to rest after their wilderness-state of trial and wandering; and, for this reason, their redemption from Egypt became the type of ours; their warfare in the desert, and their settlement in a good land, in peace and safety, the type of our pilgrimage, and final abode in heaven.

This view, indeed, the apostle had laid down in the former part of this epistle, chap. iv. His position is, that believers "enter into rest;" now into spiritual rest; hereafter into heavenly rest. And he shows that this was anticipated in the revelations of the Old Testament. This he does, by quoting from a psalm of David, (the ninety-fifth,) in which he calls upon the Jews of his day to worship and obey God, in order that they might "enter into God's rest;" and not to "harden their hearts," like their fathers, who were excluded from it by the oath of God. Now, this "rest," this "keeping of a Sabbath," mentioned by David, could not be the original resting of God from his works, nor the rest of the literal Canaan; for the children of Israel had been settled in Canaan many ages. He speaks of "another day," another "Sabbatism," which always, therefore, has "remained" for holy souls; the rest of the soul, and the rest of heaven; of both which the ancient Sabbaths, and the rest of Canaan, were types.

The same doctrine, the typical character of Canaan, the apostle teaches in this chapter. Abraham received a promise of the land of

Canaan ; but he understood that the temporal promise was the inferior part of the covenant, and that with this was conveyed the promise of eternal life. And this was made apparent from his dwelling in Canaan "by faith ;" and that not merely a faith that God would give it to his seed, though he believed that, but a faith which "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." And his conduct was publicly illustrative of his faith. With wealth and power equal to the petty chiefs and kings who had their royal cities and established dominions in Canaan, he built no city ; he established no principality ; although policy might have whispered that, by so doing, he might have facilitated the occupation of the whole country by his descendants. He was dead to all such considerations. The clearer revelation of a "better country, that is, a heavenly," had kindled all the spirituality of his mind ; and he confessed that he was a "stranger," seeking this better country. And, to show that he was so, "he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country," dwelling only in tabernacles or tents, and "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

Being anxious that you should understand the Scriptures on which I address you, as far as I can assist you, I have thus explained the text. Consider then,

I. The object of Abraham's desire : "a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

This was the view under which the future state was presented to him ; and it suggests,

1. The immortality of its inhabitants. The city "hath foundations ;" and shall ever more endure.

2. The changelessness of its enjoyments. This is also intimated by the term "foundations." Its happiness is permanent.

3. The glory of the state : "whose Builder is God ;" that is, in a special sense. It displays, in a peculiar degree, his power, wisdom, and goodness ; as we learn from the description of the New Jerusalem, given in the Revelation of St. John !

4. Common participation. There is society. This multiplies happiness to angels and saints. It is a law of our moral nature that it should do so. The number of beings does not lessen the confidence of each in God, or diminish individual felicity, as infidel philosophers have taught. Heaven is now increasing in happiness, by every soul redeemed into it.

5. Perfect moral order : "whose Maker is God." *Δημιουργος* may mean ruler ; one who labours for the public good. Perhaps this answers to "God the Judge of all," the Ruler of all, in a state of willing, loving subjection. What a state ! We never yet saw a sinless society, a world of perfect order. There it is ! O it is worthy of our desire, hope, faith ! We proceed to notice,

II. Those practical suggestions which this singular, but instructive, conduct of Abraham suggests. He chose the pilgrim's life, and dwelt in tents, rather than he would inhabit a city on earth.

1. We are taught by this conduct of Abraham the true ground of the eminent piety of God's ancient saints.

We admire them ; and justly. They live in the records of the Church ; and will for ever live. The names of kings, philosophers,

statesmen, soldiers ; all that, in those ages, kept the world awake ; all that filled the largest spaces in the public eye are forgotten : but these are ever before us ; objects of affectionate admiration. Their piety conferred on them this immortality. But on what was that piety grounded ? Do we ever consider that ? Let us not be like the hypocrites of our Lord's days, who "garnished the tombs of the prophets," but whose spirit they overlooked or hated. The secret of all this eminence was their preference of things spiritual to things temporal. The former had all their hearts ; and they must have the whole of ours. Without this all piety will wither and decay. Then only shall we live in tents like them, and effectually seek the "city which hath foundations."

2. We are taught to regulate our choice in life, by our superior regard to the interests of the soul.

The patriarchs had clearer views of the future state from the covenant which secured Canaan to them. They were powerfully and beneficially influenced by the discovery. The spirit of strangeness, of mortification to earth came upon them ; and they preferred to live in tents, lest an earthly spirit should prevail. Let this teach us, when different paths thus open to us in life,—when changes and new prospects appear,—to consider how these are likely to affect our souls ; and let us choose the safe, although the less promising, path. Then we may "commit our way" with confidence "to the Lord." This is a good rule as to the settlement of children. Let us choose the safer path for them ; and then we can commit them to the Lord. Then we "choose to dwell in tents, with Isaac and Jacob."

3. We are taught a noble indifference to the accommodations of our pilgrimage.

We are sojourners. Whether we dwell in tents, as to our spirit, or not, we do so in reality. Life is frail and uncertain ; eternity is at hand. I ask, Is it fit that our first care should be worldly ? that our desires after earthly things should exceed our desires after things heavenly ? that our disappointments should be more keen than our prospects are cheering ? The apostle would not suffer passionate expressions of grief to be used by the first Christians. They were not to "sorrow," as men "without hope." And he lays down the rule, "Brethren, the time is short : it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it : for the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii, 29-31. Awake, lest the tent should fall, and leave the inhabitant unprepared to meet God !

4. We are taught to be willing to make sacrifices for the religious good of others.

This is one reason why the patriarchs chose to dwell in tents, that they might "confess" the doctrine of immortality. Thus they "declared plainly that they sought a city." Our sacrifices are different from those which were made by the patriarchs ; but we are taught the principle by which they were actuated. We are to prefer the instruction and spiritual improvement of others to our own convenience, ease, and secular advantage. That principle has operated in all useful men, ac-

cording to the example of St. Paul; and it must influence all true Christians. Giving up my will may be a proof of it; not using that which may be lawful to me, but a stumbling block to others. Generally, we discover this principle in a prompt disposition to labour for others, to be zealous, and liberal.

5. We are taught how to value any thing which may minister to our edification.

Canaan was an object of choice, as the type. The patriarchs might have lived in tents in Chaldea; but these would not so strongly have reminded them of heaven. They could not walk abroad; but the type suggested the antitype. Its rocks, its security, its valleys, the richness of its soil, all were figures of the better country. Canaan was a means of grace to them. So do you attach yourselves to the word of God; to the ordinances of his sanctuary; to ministers, friends, and all who may do you spiritual good; so shall they all conduce to your spiritual improvement, and serve as a scale by which you will ascend to heaven.

SERMON LXXV.—*The Working out of Salvation.*

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” Phil. ii, 12, 13.

MEN live to eat and drink, to plant, to build, to buy, and to sell. And what is that being who busies himself so much with earth? A transient sojourner; a spirit, hastening to the bar of God. Surely, then, we have other and higher concerns. This book tells us we have others. This house, this Sabbath day, your own hearts, confirm it. The text informs us what this concern is: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

We call your attention,

I. To the salvation which is to be wrought out.

II. To the manner in which this is to be done.

III. To the encouragement afforded by the declaration, “God worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

I. The term “salvation” has two senses,—deliverance, and a being raised to that state of holiness and happiness which God designs. In the text we suppose it includes both. Salvation was not, as some pretend, finished on the cross. It was not even secured; since something depends upon our own act. Salvation is a process. The first step is, deliverance from blindness and insensibility; the second, from condemnation. Our salvation then proceeds into a state of entire conformity to the mind of Christ. Yet it supposes growth, even then. It is also preservation, every moment, from temptation, sloth, neglect, impatience, until at death the pure spirit is committed into the hands of the Father, and enters upon the perfect and endless happiness of heaven.

We proceed to consider,

II. The manner in which salvation is to be wrought out.

1. The term “work” denotes a vigorous application of the mind,

To serious thoughts.

To the prayerful exercises of faith.

To the government of the heart.

To the resistance of temptation.

To the means of grace,—“statutes and ordinances;” things appointed and arranged, with a reference to our spiritual improvement.

To practical religion.

2. Salvation is to be worked out,—

By repentance, and faith in the blood of atonement, till justification and sanctification are secured. Our daily contests and attainments must be prosecuted till Heaven shall crown the conqueror. The apostle adds,

3. “With fear and trembling :”

Because of the treachery of the heart.

The numbers who have fallen.

The immense stake we have at issue.

The frown of God.

III. The encouragement afforded by the declaration, “God worketh in you both to will and to do.”

This settles the disputed point of Divine help and human agency; not philosophically, but authoritatively and practically. Neither does God so work in man as to render him a mechanical instrument; nor does man so work as that the work is to be attributed to his own powers.

God works “to will and to do.” A great part of the controversy respecting free will arises from not distinguishing between a power to will and the act of willing. That such a distinction is just, appears most clearly from God’s working in us “to do.” Now, it were absurd to say, God does, that is, prays, watches, and believes for us; but he gives the power. It were equally absurd to say, God wills for us; but he gives the power to will; for he restores free agency. Again: if God necessitated our doing, he would not “work in us to do,” but by us to do; so, if he necessitated our will, he would not work, not “in us to will,” but by us to will. The sense is, that he works in us, that we may ourselves will and do.

God works in us to will. Several operations are necessary here. He enlightens the mind; impresses upon us the things that belong to our peace; and sets before us the motives which persuade the will. This, however, is not power to do. “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” God strengthens us by the rich effusions of his blessed Spirit. He does not convey all power at once. Some degree of it is given, independently of ourselves. Afterward the power is increased according to our diligence, and faith, and improvement. What then is there that you cannot attain? “God worketh in you.”

Do you doubt of your attaining to saving faith? “God worketh in you;” and his grace is sufficient.

Do you doubt of your attaining power over sin? “God worketh in you;” and is any thing too hard for him?

Do you doubt of your gaining complete salvation? “God worketh in you;” and his almighty Spirit can sanctify the most corrupt and depraved nature.

Do you doubt your victory over trouble and conflict? Fear not; "God worketh in you;" and his strength shall be so made perfect in your weakness, that you shall be even "more than conquerors."

1. If you neglect your proper work, think not to blame God. He has both given and offered power.

2. If you have it not, you have not asked, or have not employed it.

3. In proportion as you are strengthened you act. Live then near to God.

4. The glory of salvation is the Lord's. You do nothing but in his power.

SERMON LXXVI.—*The Rest of the Soul.*

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul," Psalm cxvi, 7.

THE current of the thoughts and desires of the natural man carries him from God. "God is not in all his thoughts." Can any thing more strikingly prove that our nature is not what it was designed to be, and what it once was? Could God make man to forget him? Such a world as this forbids the thought. The very nature of the soul, so inquiring, so active, forbids it. Happy they who have been brought to remember, and turn to the Lord their God! Yet they are not safe from that evil influence within and without, which bears away from God. And they will often feel how necessary it is to recall themselves from their wanderings, and to summon and allure their spirits to return to him. Let me then call your attention,

I. To God, as the rest of the soul.

II. To the circumstances in which we are more specially called to return to him under this character.

I. God is the rest of the soul.

He is so,

1. As the light of the intellect.

That men are indifferent to religious truth, is a fact which, degrading as it is, must be acknowledged. God in his mercy does not, however, always suffer the spirit to rest; and a feeling after that which it knows not, that which it enjoys not, is excited. Where then shall the soul find that rest from its darkness and perplexity which it seeks? Its views of God, of itself, of the means of pardon, of spiritual things, are obscure. Thus the soul is bewildered, till, with simplicity and docility, it returns to God in Christ. Then his character opens; then the helplessness of man is seen and felt; then the wondrous method of salvation by faith is discovered; then are seen the nature and beauty of holiness; then the methods of a holy walk with God are discerned; all is light. Good and evil then display their boundaries and distinctions. The paths of life and of death are set before the eye; this life is connected with another; and in that knowledge which the soul needs for its safety and comfort, it rests with a demonstration which dissipates all doubt. The morning has broken upon the steps of the traveller; and he has that rest of mind which results from his having

found the path which leads to the end of his journey. "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

2. God is the rest of the soul, as the refuge from the charges of our consciences.

Conscience implies a knowledge of sin, with a sense of its evil, and a just apprehension of death as its consequence. In proportion as we come to the knowledge of the real fact of our condition, this "conscience of sins" must be more poignant. Perhaps none on earth know the extreme of the case. We must so know it, as that it may alarm, produce dread, and an effort to "flee from the wrath to come." But whither shall we flee? Shall we flee to God? But he is the offended party, the judge. It is his wrath we dread. True; and yet, such is the glorious mystery of the case, from that very dread he is the refuge. Through Christ he may be approached without dread. He enjoins faith, as the term of acceptance, instead of obedience; and the testimony of his reconciliation gives rest to the soul. What shall disturb it? "Who," says the apostle triumphantly, "shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" So, when those charges occur again, we must plead guilty to them: but the same faith brings the same peace and rest.

3. God is the rest of the soul, as our chief good.

Man's chief good was a subject of discussion and dispute for ages; philosophers not agreeing in what it consisted. All, however, acknowledged this,—that, in whatever it might consist, the soul could rest in nothing inferior. Here they were right. That chief good is revealed to us. "I am God all-sufficient," said the Lord to Abraham, Gen. xvii, 1. Meditate on this. He is sufficient for himself, and for all others. Like his emblem, the sun, he has a fulness of light in himself. And yet, with regard to the sun, were a thousand millions more creatures to crowd the earth, not one of them should want light and heat; and were a thousand more earths placed in the sweep of space, there are light and vitality sufficient for them all. The same remark applies to God. Here then the spirit rests. That which prevents rest in the creature is, that there is a degree of desire in us beyond what the creature can gratify. You see and feel the proof of this every where. But can you extend your desires beyond what you see in God, or beyond what he can supply? He could make the creature to you far more excellent and satisfying than it is; for all good in the creature is already from him; and one effect of his blessing is, to make the creature more satisfying. If he give, for instance, a thankful heart; if he sanctify, and take the curse from your lawful enjoyments; if he give his grace to your children and friends, and array them with his image; he can thus make them more satisfying to you. In heaven he will make the creature more full and felicitous. What then is he, the Fountain? "Whom have we in heaven but him?" He is all purity, all power, all constancy, all condescension, all fulness. "The Lord is my light and my salvation," says the psalmist. "The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." It is under these views that the soul rests in him.

4. God is the rest of the soul, as our almighty protector.

It is not possible for us seriously to look around at our dangers,

without being convinced how much we need a guardianship higher than our own caution and strength. Evil lies in ambush in every circumstance. Satan employs his artifice and malignity ; the world, its enticements and snares. Sometimes the malice of men assails us. "Let me not fall into the hand of man," says David. He feared THAT more than pestilence. There is sometimes a formidable array of perplexing circumstances, which no human hand can turn, any more than it could prevent the collection of clouds and storms, rising in some dark quarter of the heavens. Great is the disquiet of the soul if it has no hope in God. But God is the refuge of his saints ; and, as such, the soul rests in him. "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." "When my heart is overwhelmed," tossed, agitated, as by waves, "lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." From that Rock the soul sees the swelling of the storm, but is secure. So the prophet rested in God when the Syrian army was about him. His servant saw only the Syrians ; he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. Hence the lofty language of the psalm, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," Psalm xlii, 1-3.

5. God is the rest of the soul, as our great and ultimate end.

We have an object in all things. Some objects are unlawful ; others lawful ; but when lawful, there ought to be an end beyond and above the objects themselves ; and that end is God. We may make success, credit with others, the attaining of some good, the avoidance of some trouble, our ends ; and lawfully, if they be subordinate ones. But the soul will not find its rest in them. Nothing but doing, and suffering, and enjoying all to the glory of God, can make them subservient to our rest. "Walk before me," in the sight of me. Then we have the "testimony that we please God." Then the soul rests.

We proceed to consider,

II. The circumstances under which we are more especially called to return to God our rest.

Tranquillity ought to be the habit of a Christian : the peace of God ruling the heart, all its affections, cares, and fears, spreading its wand over the agitations of the soul, as Moses spread his over the sea, so that after it had stood trembling and heaving on heaps, the even surface was restored, and it flowed on, smooth and natural, as before. Whatever, therefore, disturbs, creates a season in which we are to summon the soul back to her rest.

1. When we are too much affected by the cares of ordinary life.

Our Lord knew our danger when he said, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with cares." Charged with cares they must often be ; but not "overcharged." The remedy for this is, to summon the spirit to return to its rest, when any deviation is felt or feared. And nothing is so powerful a motive to this, as the reflection, "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with me." Past times are proofs of this ; and I may still "cast my care upon him," because he still "careth for me."

2. Another season is, when we are pressed with uneasy fears as to our spiritual safety.

We are to be anxious to discover whether such fears have any just foundation. But often, when they have not, they form a part of our temptation. Such fears may be the result of mistaking sensible joys as the measure of our grace. We ought to aspire after them; but we "live by faith," not by joy. Peace must be the result of a firm faith; joy is the effect of many circumstances. Or these fears may be the result of views partially directed to the awful attributes of God, his holiness and justice. Partial views of goodness lead to presumption; partial views of justice and holiness lead to bondage. Both attributes are united in the atonement; both are equally seen in that "glory of God" which shines in the "face of Jesus Christ." Perfect love casteth out the "fear which hath torment;" while it preserves that which is monitory. Or these fears may result from reflecting upon the falls of others, and our own past failures. Yet these ought only to produce caution, not prevent us from claiming a full salvation from God, as though our unbelief, or that of others, made the "truth of God of none effect." That truth stands sure. Fly again to that rock, and you shall find it unshaken. Or evil spirits may be suffered in various ways, mysterious to us, to "trouble the soul;" and their influence, like a cloud passing over a tranquil water, shall at once darken and ruffle it. But "wait upon God;" and the dark shade shall be chased by the spreading splendour of some new break of light, and the agitation shall subside at the omnipotent voice, "Peace, be still!" In all these uneasy moments say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul;" and remember how "bountifully the Lord hath dealt with thee," in many similar exercises.

3. When we have vainly perplexed ourselves with difficulties.

It is one of our failings that we too often go into difficulties, without a sufficient sense of our weakness. So Asaph, when he saw the "prosperity of the wicked." See Psalm lxxiii. This may stand as a specimen. He sought the solution in his own strength, and "was troubled," till he went into the "sanctuary of God." Then how sweetly did he return unto his rest! In Job we have an instance of this disturbed state of mind, arising from another cause, from judging what it was fit for the Lord to do. The challenges out of the whirlwind made Job feel that it was not for "potsherds of the earth" to strive with their Maker; and when he was brought to this, he returned to his rest.

4. When we have experienced special deliverance.

Having obtained from God pardon, a revival of piety, restoration from affliction, deliverance from temptation and sorrow; then we ought to summon the spirit to "cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord," and to rest more fully in Him, who is the strength of our heart, our portion, our exceeding great reward.

SERMON LXXVII.—*The Mission Field Admeasured.*

“But we will not boast of things without our measure, (not measured,) but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you : for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the Gospel of Christ : not boasting of things without our measure, (not measured,) that is, of other men’s labours ; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, (with respect to our line into abundance,) to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you,” 2 Corinthians x, 13–16.

THERE is something in the spirit of Christianity which raises and ennobles the whole moral man. It effects this by expanding, and elevating, and purifying all those powers which distinguish him as an accountable and immortal being. It finds all its subjects polluted, and it washes and hallows them ; carnal, and it gives them spirituality ; in bondage, and it proclaims to them liberty ; alienated from God, and it gives them fellowship with him ; cold and selfish, and it bears them away from their selfish centre into the spirit and activity of universal charity.

But by nothing is this elevation of character more impressively presented than by that holy zeal which it kindles in the hearts of all who are fully imbued with its spirit, and who live under the full impression of its necessary connection with the present and eternal happiness of all mankind. Of this St. Paul is at once an instance and a high example. Never had he been the constant model of Christians, could his zeal have bounded itself within a party, and been detached from love ; had it shrunk into a space less than the circumference of the earth ; and had it failed to sympathize with the wretched, to pity the ignorant, to weep over the wreck of immortal souls, to suffer, to labour, to hasten from country to country, in perils both by land and by water, till all the earth had heard the name of the Redeemer, and monuments to the power of the Gospel had glittered from every shore of the ocean, and studded every track of man.

For such was the zeal of him who “persecuted this way unto the death.” He found mercy. Freely he received, and freely he bestowed ; convinced at once that there was salvation in Jesus, and salvation in no other : in no other system than that of the Gospel ; neither in the wisdom of the Greeks, nor in the abolished religion of the Jews ; in no idol worship, and in no idol name. “The love of Christ constrained him ; for he thus judged, that if one died for all, then were all dead,” and needed that great act of Divine and boundless love.—And he farther judged, that an unknown Saviour is no Saviour ; that his death must be proclaimed, and its purchased blessings offered, before those who were dead could live to him.

This was his solemn judgment. How it influenced him is explained in the text. He had received a commission ; and he gloried in it, because the work assigned him thereby was a work of mercy. In declaring himself an apostle to the Corinthians, he did not boast of things beyond measure, or not measured out ; for God had measured

out the whole world as the field of the labours of Christian preachers. Corinth certainly was not beyond his measure ; for his work had been owned there. But, much as he rejoiced in this, much as he gloried in it, the vast circuit which he had already filled with the sound of salvation could not limit either his boundary or his feelings. There were "regions beyond" still in the shadow of death ; and he rejoiced in his success at Corinth chiefly, as by the faith of the Church there he might abundantly enlarge the sphere of his labours into the pagan world. O powerful example to us ! Never, amidst this cultivated valley which the apostle had planted, watered, and covered with living verdure, did he forget "the regions beyond." The weight of their miseries rested upon his pitying spirit ; and still he urges on his course, to carry them salvation, resting only to gather strength ; and remaining with the Churches already formed only to catch up their fire and energy into the ever-burning and restless flame of his own charity.

The text, dictated as it was by the full ardour of the missionary spirit, cannot but afford interesting topics for an occasion like the present ; and we have, therefore,

I. The general field which is measured out for the labours of the preachers of the Gospel.

That field is the world. It was impossible for the apostle, with all his impulsive zeal, to go beyond his measure. His commission was, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Under this head it is not difficult to establish a proposition which ought never to be lost sight of in our reasonings on the moral state of mankind, and which is intimately connected with our Christian duties. It is, that so far is the world from being left without a suitable provision of moral assistance, from revelation, that provision has more than once been effectually made. It is not true, that man was ever left without this proof of the mercy of his God. But how is this proposition to be established ? We shall not enter into the question, how much directive light still remains ; nor affect to hide the solemn fact, that a great portion of our race is now, and has been in former ages, walking in darkness, and sitting in the shadow of death. What we maintain on this subject is, that the cause of this fact is not to be found in the dispensations of God. In the care of the Father of the spirits of all flesh, all nations have had an interest. The Scriptural history contains all the proofs that we need. It cannot be contended that the antediluvians, until the flood, did not enjoy the benefits of all the revelations which were made in that first age. The long life of the patriarchs, and a succession of preachers, probably from Enoch to Noah, secured this.

What, then, was the case, as to the truths which were introduced by Noah into the new world, from the old, and the additional revelations that were made to him ? All his sons were equally sharers in them ; and that the whole might have been preserved and continued, is evident from the fact, that many of them exist to the present day. The religious rites of all nations, like their language, bear evidence of a common origin. The broken notices of truth, like mutilated fragments of a temple, adorned with sculpture, and built up into wretched hovels,

show that a temple was once erected. All the new information obtained on this subject from the testimony of missionaries and travellers gives additional proof of this. If we find notions of God among all nations, can any reason be given why the proper views of him which were entertained in the first ages of the world should not have been transmitted? If the practice of offering sacrifice has been perpetuated, why could not the typical intention of sacrifice have been preserved? If some principles of morals, why not all? If we see errors handed over by tradition without alteration,—as, for instance, the transmigration of souls,—why might not truth be preserved by the same means? Tradition is not necessarily an inadequate medium for transmitting the first principles of a religion.

Nor have we only this evidence of the care of God for the religious interests of all nations. The vocation of Abraham was intended for the instruction of the world. He bore testimony, in the most populous part of the east, to the doctrine of immortality, by living in tents. He confessed in common with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise, that he was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, and that he desired a better country; “for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,” Heb. xi, 10. The Jewish institute was designed for the benefit of the world. The judgments and mercies connected with the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, and their establishment in the land of Canaan, had the same reference. The temple was erected at Jerusalem, not only for the use of the Jew, but as “a house of prayer for all nations.” Hence the prayer of Solomon, offered at its dedication: “Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name’s sake; (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name,” 1 Kings viii, 41–43. And can we for a moment doubt that Christianity is designed for the world? To all the world Christ sent his disciples; and to a great part of the world they actually went. The continuance of the zeal of the first ages would have carried the light into all the earth, and have left no “regions beyond” the Church, “where Christ is not named.” Why, then, do we affect to wonder at the mysteries of Providence, in leaving so many of our race to wander without direction, and to live without the Gospel? God has not left them; but they have been left by their more highly-favoured fellow men. The mystery is a mystery of human iniquity, not of Divine partiality. It is a mystery, not of Divine reprobation, but of human unfeelingness. The Jewish and Christian Churches, in succession, have incurred the guilt of unfaithfulness. The talent has been hidden in the earth; and the once laborious servant has become weary of his work. When piety decayed in the heart, the flame of love and zeal decayed with it, and the world was forgotten. Ah! “we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that, when he has cried to us out of the pit, and when we saw the anguish of his soul, we would not hear.”

If any person say, this only shifts the difficulty, but does not remove it; we may allow it. It is a mystery still, that the state of the world should be left determinable by the will of those Churches who in different ages have been favoured by the light of Divine revelation. But why should we single this out as a peculiar mystery, and sometimes even urge it as an objection against Providence? Has not God made man dependent upon man in every thing? Does it not depend on you to instruct your neighbour, and your children? If you neglect them, they shall remain ignorant and vicious; but will you ask why God himself does not perform your work, or raise up other agents to perform it? or will you in this case accuse him of indifference? The fact, then, is, that God, for wise and gracious purposes, has made all intelligent creatures dependent upon each other; and the wisdom and goodness of this arrangement are very obvious. In pursuance of this principle, he gave a dark world to an enlightened Church; and instead of charging God foolishly with its darkness, we ought to humble ourselves that we have not faithfully dispersed his light. Christianity is the religion of the world; Christians are the light of the world; and if we refuse to hold forth the word of life,—to hold up the directive light,—then are we verily guilty concerning our brother. Let every mouth be stopped; and let even the Church be acknowledged to be guilty before God.

II. We learn from the text, that, beside this general appointment of the world as the field of labour, particular portions are often signally marked out for immediate and zealous cultivation.

St. Paul speaks of the “measure of the rule,” or line. Some writers think he refers to the line which marked out the race courses of the ancients; others, that he refers to the line which was used in measuring land. The idea is the same in both cases; and the meaning is, that the efforts of the apostles were directed and appointed to particular places by Him who knew where they might be best employed. As he uses agents, those agents have different qualifications. There is severally in them a suitableness to different departments of the great work, and to different places. This is his prerogative as the Lord of the harvest; as the Master of his servants; as the Commander of the sacramental host of God’s elect.

This special appointment was, however, variously indicated; and was in some cases much less marked and striking than in others. Sometimes the direction was supernatural; as when St. Peter was taught by a vision to preach to the Gentiles, and to “call no man common or unclean;” and when there stood before St. Paul a man of Macedonia, who said, “Come over and help us.” Sometimes the Spirit of God addressed the first teachers of Christianity in an audible voice; as when he said to the Evangelist Philip, in reference to the Ethiopian eunuch, “Go near and join thyself to this chariot,” Acts viii, 29. Sometimes a strong impression was made upon the mind. Thus St. Paul was “pressed in the spirit,” to preach Christ in the city of Corinth. At other times the measures of those primitive teachers of Christianity were directed by what appeared to them, upon a view of any case, the most effectual means of promoting their great work. Thus St. Paul, in one of his journeys, purposed to return through Macedonia; and oftentimes did he purpose to visit Rome, when oppor-

tunity should serve. He seems frequently to have placed before him the map of the world, and to have marked out some new route of Christian zeal, without any special direction from above, but in the confidence that, as he purposed only the glory of his Master, he should take with him his Master's blessing; and in not a few instances were the determinations of the first preachers fixed by the impression made upon their minds by the peculiar moral wretchedness and want of some particular people. Thus when St. Paul walked through Athens his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry; and forthwith he began to preach to them Jesus.

From all this we may learn that though they had occasionally supernatural direction, by supernatural means, yet they acknowledged a supernatural direction where the means were natural, and the direction invisible. Not only did they see the line stretched when visions descended upon their slumbers, or the voice of the Spirit spoke to them; but also when opportunity presented itself, and when the miseries of man seemed to press with particular urgency upon their compassion. Sometimes they went forth in the spirit of enterprise and experiment, and concluded from their success that the line had been stretched out. No particular revelation had directed St. Paul to Corinth. He was simply "pressed in spirit" after his arrival; and a noble Church proclaimed that he had not, in going to them, stretched beyond his measure. He had a line to reach even unto them. "Ye are our epistles," said he, "known and read of all men."

These views are of importance from their connection with modern efforts for extending the kingdom of Christ. Too long have Christians been waiting for calls to this work. Too long have they dozed upon the pillow of lukewarmness, waiting to be roused to action by a miraculous summons. The conversion of heathen nations has been considered by them as so apostolic a work, that it is not hoped to be revived but by apostolic prodigies. The fact, however, is, that even they were not always led by prodigies. When these occurred, they went with ardour to their work; but when they were not vouchsafed, their ardour did not abate. When special direction was given, they followed it; when they had it not, they resorted to their general principles. They acknowledged a visible hand of God extending their line; but they also acknowledged that hand, even though it was invisible, when it gave indications of duty by putting other objects in motion. Strong impressions made upon their own minds, facility of intercourse with heathen nations, opportunities of visiting particular cities and districts, were all regarded as the call of God.

Let us then ask, whether God has not stretched out our line; whether he has not, as Churches and as ministers, marked out our work; and, however circumstances may differ, substantially, and in as explicit a manner as he did the first Christians, called us to extend the knowledge of his truth in heathen lands.

In the first place, it is not to be forgotten, that our duty is as extensive as theirs. The command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," has never been repealed; and the question ought rather to be, whether God in his providence has confined us to our respective societies, and to Christian countries, by circumstances which render it impracticable for us to stretch our efforts beyond them,

and in this way has discharged us from more general duty, than whether we have evident calls to go into regions where Christ is not named. But, not to press this,—our vocation is, I think, most obvious. Have we no men “pressed in spirit,” as the apostles were? and is not this of God? If he thrust out labourers, does he not lead their minds to the work? Will any say that those blessed Moravians were mistaken in their impressions, who went into the West Indies, to sell themselves as slaves, that they might have an opportunity of preaching to the negroes? Did not God then stretch out their line? Will any one say, that the eminent man, Dr. Carey, so long “pressed in spirit” as to India, was mistaken in those impressions? or that Dr. Coke was mistaken in leading our band of missionaries to Ceylon? There was a providential arrangement connected with an inward feeling of duty; and thus God “stretched out the line” in regard to his servants.

Did the first preachers of the Gospel meet with men like Gaius, zealous to encourage their labours, and who helped them in their journeyings for the Lord’s sake? The revival of this disposition in the Church in the present day is another proof that our line is extending. Tens of thousands are ready to assist the mission work by their prayers and contributions; and to bring the messengers of the Churches on their way “after a godly sort.”

Did the apostle consider the very sight of the superstitions of Athens a call to preach to the people Jesus and the resurrection? The circumstance that the state of the heathen world is brought before us, by travellers and missionaries, is our call to the same work. This ought to stir our spirits. God in his providence shows us the misery of the heathen, that it may excite our pity, and that pity may stimulate us to send them help.

Did the apostles see in opportunities of access, the hand of God stretching out their line? By what authority do we put a different construction upon the openings which are every where presented to us? Where have we no access? Do our colonies spread through the earth; and shall we plant no Churches among them? Has human power created so many monuments; and shall Christian piety have no enterprise? Does commerce see her lines extending in so many directions; and shall we be so blind as not to see that she marks the track which Christian zeal is to follow, and beckons, with every new direction she takes, Christian charity to quicken her steps, and to haste with better treasures?

And did the apostles contemplate their successes, as the proof that God had directed their progress, and assigned them their work? did St. Paul boast of Corinth as an instance of this? We can justify every enterprise that we have undertaken. We do not boast of things not measured to us. The event proves that there was no presumption, and no mistake. Where have modern missionaries laboured without substantial proofs of this kind? In the west and in the east, on islands and continents, the Lord has been with them giving testimony to the word of his grace. In every direction the Lord of the whole earth is measuring out to us fields of labour, more numerous than we can occupy and cultivate without additional help.

III. The text presents us with the compassionate regard of the apostle for those nations which were not visited by the light of Christianity.

His line had stretched as far as Corinth. To that part of his course he had run with unabated ardour ; and he now looks with anticipation into larger fields, and new scenes of labour and of triumph. He hopes to be enlarged by the Corinthians to preach the Gospel in regions beyond them.

And why did his eye measure those regions ? Why was his foot restless till he penetrated them ? Was this the zeal of a partisan ? A higher motive than mere party can supply actuated him. "The love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." It was the contemplation of their moral condition, and consequent danger, that affected him, and called forth his exertions. Had he thought, as some Christians have done, that the heathen were safe and happy, he would not have wept over them, and prayed for them, and have suffered and laboured to effect their conversion, as we are assured he did. But these were not his sentiments. He saw them perishing, in superstition, idolatry, depravity, and guilt ; and he knew that the Gospel would save thousands who would not be saved without it.

This is the case in regard to heathen nations now. There are still "regions beyond" the boundaries of the Church, and the range of evangelical light. What they were in the apostolic age, they are now, if not worse ; and they ought to excite equal regards. Let us contemplate them.

1. They are regions of darkness.

If they had retained all their primitive light, yet the Gospel would have been necessary as the end of the law, and of other dispensations of religion. But that light has been extinguished ; and they are now involved in a darkness so thick and palpable, that it has obscured the characters of God in his works, in providence, and in tradition. The darkness is so intense, that it has hidden the only way of reconciliation. They once knew the way to the throne of grace through the blood of sacrifice. That way they have lost ; and they now wander in ten thousand paths. But "destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known." Theirs is a darkness so dense, that the plainest morals are confounded ; and the doctrine of the immortality of man, and the solemn scenes of eternity, have faded away ; and, for any thing that paganism can do, they have faded away for ever.

2. They are regions of vain, inefficient superstition.

To enumerate the forms, the errant fancies, of superstition, is impossible. Many of them are ridiculous,—the very sport and laughter of our children ; and we might regard them in the same light, if they were unconnected with serious consideration. But they have been laughed at too long ; and we ought now to weep over them. They have been introduced into books of travel, to enliven a page. They are now to be written on our memories, to rend our hearts : for can any object be more affecting than the spectacle of millions seeking rest, and finding none, by the empty, the disgusting, the sanguinary forms of heathen worship ? They offer sacrifices which leave sin unatoned ; they call on Baal, but he hears them not ; they purify the body, but the polluted spirit retains all its foulness ; they torture the body, but the inward sting remains ; they lay up a stock of merit to secure a future

happiness, and die without hope. "He feedeth upon ashes : a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isaiah xlv, 20. He looks for light, and behold darkness. Do we laugh at the ravings of lunacy? Do we scoff at the stumbles of the blind? Who would not give reason to the one, and sight to the other? Who then would not give light to them that sit in moral darkness, and wisdom to those who have no spiritual understanding?

3. They are regions of diabolical dominion.

This is a truth more literal than some imagine. Satan worketh in the children of disobedience. This is spoken of heathens emphatically; and the proof of this doctrine is seen in the anticipations of the Saviour, who says, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." And the time is coming when Satan shall be bound, and no longer permitted to deceive the nations.

What indications of the solemn fact of Satan's power over the heathen have we in their tempers and habits! "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful," Rom. i, 29-31. The same indications of his power are seen in heathen worship, among the highest acts of which are debauchery and murder. The Gentiles sacrifice to devils, not to God; and in many instances the devil himself, the god of this world, is openly and avowedly worshipped, and his temples are still crowded with votaries, presenting to him their offerings and vows. The inspiration of such worship, like itself, is purely evil. Can we wonder that the apostles apprehended danger, and were moved to pity when they saw the whole world in the wicked one? Can we contemplate such "regions" without similar emotions, and without being moved to similar exertions?

4. They are regions of misery.

"Happy is the people that have the Lord for their God." This is the sentiment of the royal psalmist, and is echoed through all the periods of the history of the Jewish nation. Change the God, and you reverse the effect. When devils are the gods, what must be the condition of the worshippers? He who was a liar from the beginning was also a murderer. He who delights in darkness delights also in misery. It is under its deepest shadow that he sends forth his demons of hatred, and malice, and murder, to fill with misery the regions where he reigns. Have we ever dreamed of the happiness of his subjects? Where are the proofs? Do you find them in bosoms where all is vice and lawless passion; in those families where all is discord and envy? in that state of social life where an unabated selfishness predominates? Shall we find it where the poor meet with no pity; where age and infirmity have no care; where the smiles of infancy cannot disarm the bloody purpose of immolation; where governments are unmitigated tyrannies; where laws are partial; and where religion itself wears robes stained with blood, never speaks but to curse, and never lifts her hand but to inflict a wound? a religion which never felt a sympathy, and never administered a blessing. Such

are the "regions beyond," which you are invited to visit. But these are only their minor miseries. Deeply as the people are drenched in them, bitter as is their cup, to him who believes his Bible their case presents scenes of more impressive solemnity. Is idolatry "the abominable thing" that God "hateth?" Is his word full of awful denunciations against it? Do both Testaments flame with the vengeance of the God of purity and justice? Does the one declare that he will pour his fury upon the heathen that know him not, and upon the families that call not upon his name? and the other, that they that do such things as those to which the heathen are universally addicted, shall not inherit the kingdom of God? What is the meaning of all these words? Will any man dare to adopt a theory which shall take away all their meaning, and reduce them to empty menaces? They are the words of truth; and they show us the "regions beyond" under the most emphatic maledictions of Heaven. They show us millions of men attainted of high treason against the Divine Majesty, and exposed in life to his displeasure, in death to despair, and in eternity to everlasting punishment.

Such were the views under which the apostle contemplated these regions. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Such are the views and emotions with which we ought to consider them. For this they are spread before us. Let the heathen be pitied; let them be visited. Send them your Gospel; let it fly abroad, and delay not. Bid it "heal the bruised, bind up the broken-hearted, preach deliverance to the captives, and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

III. We have the manner in which the apostle connects his missionary enterprises with the co-operation of Christian Churches. "Having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand."

The first thing that is to be remarked in this part of the text is, that the apostle supposes that the Corinthians were equally bound with him to the duty of enlarging the sphere of evangelical labour; and that they had only a claim upon the exclusive enjoyment of the Christian ministry until they had acquired a certain maturity in religious knowledge and experience;—till their "faith was increased." When the apostles founded Churches, they appointed ministers and ordinances; they instructed them in doctrines; corrected their errors; and watched over them till they could be left to their own pastors. But when their "faith was increased," when they were sufficiently instructed in the knowledge and belief of the Gospel, then they went forth, and called for their assistance in extending the knowledge of Christ into "the regions beyond."

We collect from this, that as soon as a Church is established in the faith, it is to become co-operative in its exertions to spread the kingdom of Christ. As soon as its own lamp is trimmed, it is to be held forth to direct the steps of others. This is not only the privilege, but the duty, of every Church; and it is a duty incumbent upon you. Of this there can be no question. You have been long established as a Christian society; you agree in the belief of the vital doctrines of

Christianity ; you have a regular ministry ; and you have no right to monopolize these advantages. If there are men who are panting to launch into "the regions beyond," they have a right to hope by you to be "enlarged according to their rule abundantly ;" and you are bound to realize their hopes and desires.

But by what means can this enlargement be granted by you ?

1. By your friendly and affectionate feelings toward Christian missionaries.

The word which is here rendered "enlarged," also signifies to extol, to praise : and this is important. The missionary spirit ought to be held in high esteem. Can we more effectually damp the holy ardour by which it is characterized, than by treating it with lightness and coldness ? The world will scorn it ; infidels will ridicule it ; but in the bosom of the Church the devoted missionary is to be cherished. How unnatural, how monstrous it would be, if you were to treat him as an enthusiast ; if your hearts did not beat in unison with his heart of zeal and love ! Give then to the Christian missionary your friendly hail and cheering applause ; and thus assist in bearing up his heart and hands under his discouragements, privations, and exhausting labours.

2. By considering the cause your own.

You should identify yourselves with it. Nothing is so likely to enlarge the kingdom of Christ as this, because nothing is so likely to propagate the missionary ministry. When your thoughts, feelings, conversation, are such as to express an intense interest in the case of the heathen, your zeal will provoke others to the cultivation of the same spirit, and to corresponding efforts ; and your own exertions will be strenuous and persevering, and the Divine blessing will attend them.

3. By your prayers.

How often is prayer referred to by St. Paul ! He was ever soliciting and leaning upon the prayers of the faithful for the success of his labours. We ought especially to pray for the missionary cause. It is God that must raise up men for the missionary work, and endure them with the requisite zeal, and patience, and self denial. He must give them opportunities of usefulness, by opening to them "doors of utterance," and fields of evangelical labour. He must direct them in their work, and render it successful in the conversion and salvation of men. And for all these things we are bound to present our importunate supplications to the throne of the heavenly grace. "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." Prayer brings down strength into the racer, and he seizes the prize. It fills the sails of the vessel which carries the heavenly freight. It fans the flame which consumes the stubble, and enlightens the world.

4. By your counsels and contributions.

In these respects the first Christians were "fellow helpers to the truth ;" and they have left us an example. Nor is any thing here to be narrow and contracted. The projects of missions are to be extensive. "The regions beyond" are vast ; and your wishes are to be commensurate with their wants. Missionaries are to be "enlarged abundantly ;" or into abundance ; into a large sweep of nations ; into an abundance of labours, success, and triumphs ; still extending their

line with every year ; till their line stretches into all the earth, and their word to the end of the world. One sacred sweep of benevolence beyond another should be presented, till the circumference of the globe itself is at last comprehended ; or, to find an illustration in the heaven above us, lighting up one orb of truth after another, in wider and still wider orbits, till the whole heaven shall glow with the radiance, and our moral darkness shall be banished for ever by the overpowering and ever-streaming glory.

SERMON LXXVIII.—*God raised up out of his Holy Habitation.*

“ Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord : for he is raised up out of his holy habitation,” Zechariah ii, 13.

ZECHARIAH was one of the prophets who lived after the captivity. Like Haggai, he stimulates the people to re-edify their temple and city ; and by various prophecies and scenic visions he encourages those of the captivity who remained behind, to return, and inhabit and re-establish the country.

Among these predictions we find others which clearly relate to Messias, and to the Church he was to form, and bless, and protect for ever. This cannot be denied. These predictions do not only stand alone, but are intermixed with others of lower and more immediate fulfilment. This double sense is not two senses, one contrary to the other ; but one higher than the other, and arose out of the system of typical persons and things in the Jewish Church. The chapter out of which the text is selected is an instance. Doubtless it relates to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the restoration of God’s ordinances, the calling to their own land of many people who were left behind in Babylon, to many signal providences to effect these objects, and to the comparatively flourishing state of the country after that period.

But there is more than this implied. Two passages note this. One of these, which occurs at the tenth verse of this chapter, reads thus : “ Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion : for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.” The promise relates not to the local dwelling of the Shekinah, as of old ; but to the person of the incarnate God, and to his spiritual presence with his Church after his resurrection. The other passage is verse eleven : “ Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people : and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee :” a promise which, without doubt, refers to the calling of the Gentiles into the Church during the Gospel age.

The building of the city is, therefore, in its highest sense, the building of the Church of Christ ; and the calling of the Jews from the four winds of heaven is the conversion of that people. It is around the Christian Zion that the Lord will be a wall of fire, and a glory in the midst ; and by the many nations to be joined to the Lord in that day, is to be understood the constant accession of the nations of the earth to the kingdom of our Lord, which shall continue till all the

families of the earth are blessed in him, and till all nations shall call him blessed.

To this day, then, the solemn exhortation refers. Now the sacred building is extending; now the nations are joining themselves to the Lord. In reference to this great day of astonishing operation for the conversion of the world, at this moment a voice breaks from the sanctuary, "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord; for he is raised up out of his holy habitation."

Let us consider,

I. The sense of the phrase, "God is raised up out of his holy habitation."

Most of the expressions contained in Scripture which indicate the locality of the Divine presence arose out of the circumstance of his dwelling in the tabernacle of Moses; of his resting when they rested in the wilderness, and marching before them when they advanced; leading them against their enemies, and rebuking those enemies for the sake of his people. When God thus arose, he came forth from his holy habitation. We are not, however, to suppose that the Jews thought Jehovah to be a local Deity, or that those expressions at all favoured the notion. When God is spoken of in human language, local and bodily ideas must enter into it. It is so with us, and it was so with them. The conceptions of the mind, as to the operations of God, are aided by such a phraseology; but it is not to be understood as applying to the Divine nature, as if that were limited in its presence. It was not only in the temple that the Jews conceived him to dwell, but in the vast universe; having, first, a residence among them; secondly, a residence of ineffable glory and majesty in heaven; but, at the same time, filling heaven and earth with his presence. When, therefore, they used the term, "holy habitation," they generally used it in the noble sense of Isaiah: "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place." The circumstance, that he had in the first ages of their national existence his residence among them, going forth at their head, and visibly interposing in their behalf, gave rise to another mode of expression among them. When he suffered them to fall into calamities, he was said to "hide himself," and to remain still; when he appeared to their help, he "went forth," he was "raised up." "Stir up thyself, and come and save us," says one of the sacred writers in his earnest wishes for his country's welfare.

This phraseology seems also to be generally applied to the dispensations of Providence. When wickedness prevails, when error spreads, when the Church is wasted, then the Almighty is represented as shutting his eyes, turning away his face, withholding his hand, and resting in his holy place. But when he makes himself manifest in judgment or mercy, when he has nations to punish or to bless, when his Church calls for protection and help, then he is "raised up out of his holy habitation," and "all flesh" is commanded to "keep silence" before him.

II. We may consider the occasions which more particularly procure this special interposition of God, and raise him up out of his holy habitation.

1. He is raised up by the incorrigible vices of men.

When wickedness abounds, for a time he appears to disregard it, or he interposes by gentle corrections; but there is a limit to his patience and forbearance. The barren fig tree is at once an emblem of individuals and of nations. Both find an intercessor, and both are "endured with much long-suffering;" but at length justice rises from her habitation, and the tree is hewn down, and cast into the fire. So it was in regard to the antediluvians. The Almighty bore long with them; but he was at length raised up, and swept the earth with an avenging deluge. When the iniquity of the Amorites was full, the sword of Joshua was unsheathed beyond Jordan, and avenged the cause of provoked Majesty. The Jews, having spurned the last offers of grace and mercy, by rejecting Christ and his Gospel, were exposed to unexampled calamities. Their city was laid in ruins, their national existence terminated, and "wrath came upon them to the uttermost." To every sinful individual, and to all perseveringly wicked communities, are the words of inspiration applicable: "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

2. Pride and oppression raise him up out of his habitation.

"Those kingdoms that walk in pride he will abase." This is a maxim from which he never departs; and all history is a comment upon it. The histories of nations contained in the Bible are not preserved for literary purposes. They are illustrations of the principles of the Divine government; principles which are universally applicable. Every power that is opposed to the laws of God must be overthrown; and the more proud and oppressive it is, the more certain, speedy, and marked is its downfall. There never was an act of oppression, we are warranted to say, on the general principles of the word of God, that passed unnoticed, and unavenged. One passage has a deep solemnity; and its phraseology accords with that of the text: "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation." There he sits, and beholds every injury which the fatherless and widow sustain; and from thence is he raised up to avenge their cause. This is often conspicuously seen in private life; but it is more eminently seen in nations; and hence I think we may conclude that God never suffers the evils in question to go unpunished. Too little has Christianity been permitted to influence Christian governments; if it had, they would have been more stable. But when even pagan governments have become universally oppressive, they have been overthrown. The complaints of the poor, the cries of orphans, the tears of the widow, the groans of negro slaves, resound through these lands, and call upon God to avenge the wrongs of the helpless. If God be true, these evils will be visited. O he has not ceased to listen to the cry of blood, to the sighing of the prisoner, and the appeals of those who are crushed and bruised! Systems like those in India, which cast out millions, and deny them liberty even to build a house, which by their bloody rites immolate widows, and make their children orphans, are raising up God from his holy habitation; and by mingled judgments and mercies they must be swept from the face of the earth.

3. God is raised up out of his holy habitation for the manifestation of his truth.

To every people God originally gave a saving system; and all nations might have preserved it. That they have not, is a proof of human depravity; for "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Had it not been for special interpositions from God, the truth would have wholly perished; and with it all the hopes of the world must have ended for ever. Here is the mercy of God. Nearly, very nearly, has the light been extinguished; but it has never been so entirely. Again it has been kindled; and again, by the neglect of men, brought to the point of extinction, a sickly, dying flame. Again, he that walketh among, in the midst of, the lamps of the sanctuary hath supplied the oil, multiplied the branches, and placed them in the dark parts of the earth. So, when truth was nearly lost, it was revived by new revelations to Abraham. When again diminished, the Mosaic institute was reared; like its own fiery pillar moving in the darkness of the desert, for ages the light of the entire world. After the corruption of that, the true light, incarnated in the person of Jesus, shed its glorious day over the whole civilized world. When even that was so deeply shaded, that only a few illuminated spots were seen, and those in some of the most sequestered parts of Christendom, it broke forth again at the Reformation, and enlightened the western world. And now, after ages in which he suffered them to walk in their own ways, the morning breaks upon pagan millions; and if we misunderstand not prophecy, it shall shine to the perfect day. If we rightly spell its pages, the time is come when it shall be said to the world, "Thy sun shall no more go down." "The Lord shall be thy everlasting light; and thy God thy glory." So wondrously has God preserved his truth! The beacon still stands at the entrance of the haven, though the raging billows have spent upon it the fury of ages. The imperishable seed still lives and vegetates, though the feet of ungrateful myriads have trodden it down. The sun shines, though the smoke of the bottomless pit has been vomited forth to darken it; and demons have given all the power of their agency to draw the infernal vapour round the earth, and shade all nations from its directive and reproofing light. Their efforts have only proved the intenseness of that light which is designed to "make manifest" the real state of the world, and guide the feet of all men into the way of peace.

4. God is raised up out of his holy habitation by the prayers of saints.

On this subject, happily so familiar to you, I need not dwell at any length. The slightest attention paid to the representations of the word of God is sufficient to convince us that prayer moves Him that moves the universe. Every thing encourages prayer. That which is our privilege is made our duty. The first language of the Spirit in the heart is the language of prayer. The title which God bears,—"Thou that hearest prayer;" and the throne on which he sits,—a throne of grace, a throne sprinkled with atoning blood before which we have all an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous; both encourage us to make our requests known to him in the confidence of being heard.

If you are Christians, you know the efficacy of prayer. It was your penitent and believing prayer that raised him up to pardon your sins, and fill you with peace and joy, the fruit of his forgiving love.

It is prayer that calls down his visitations, interests him in your cause, and secures to you grace to help in every time of need.

Nor less essentially is it connected with every plan for the spread of his Gospel, and the prosperity of his Church. It was when the Church cried unto the Lord in Egypt, that he came down to deliver them. He was raised up, and cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon of the Nile. It was when Solomon prayed, that the glory of the Lord filled the temple. It was while the apostles were praying, that God filled the Christian Church, on the day of pentecost, with that presence which was never to depart. The place was shaken: and "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." It was with the aid of the faithful that the Apostle Paul went forth, himself praying day and night with tears; and wherever he went God was raised up out of his holy habitation, to give testimony to the word of his grace. Every great revival of religion is thus signalized. The connection between prayer and success proves indisputably that by its pleading voice God is raised up. Yes; whether the heart sighs its prayers in silence, or a multitude this day before me lift up their voice, all heaven is moved at the sound, and the responsive voice of God breaks from the sanctuary, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." "Whatsoever two or three of you shall agree together to ask of my Father which is in heaven, it shall be done unto them." Here lies the lever which is to move the world; and it rests upon the promises of God, which cannot pass away. So it is in the Revelation of St. John. Before those great revolutions take place which are to issue in the giving of the kingdoms of the world to the Lord Christ, an angel is seen with the golden censer, containing the prayers of all saints. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest," and he will furnish the labourers, the means of sending them forth, the places of useful exertion, the disposition to receive the truth, and the desired success. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest till he shall have made Jerusalem a praise in all the earth." Before the prayers of the Christian world, the dark scene which surrounds you shall vanish; the heavy moral atmosphere shall clear up to brightness; and, like the vivifying breathings of spring, all around you shall be fanned into life, and finally shall burst into fragrance, fruit, and beauty.

5. The performance of his promise to Messiah raises God up from his holy habitation.

We ought never to forget, and especially on missionary occasions of this kind, that a decree has passed the lips of Him who is "not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should repent." That decree is not a secret one. Is it not written in the second Psalm? "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The word has passed the mouth of God. Heaven and earth have witnessed it.

"Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness rase
Those everlasting lines."

This decree is not yet fully accomplished. God has been raised up partially to accomplish it; but he will ere long put forth his power in a still more glorious manner. Even now is he raised up for this purpose. Yet let us not mistake the mode of his operation. Perhaps his power will not be seen in the march of visible grandeur; not in any but moral miracles. If I say that God is now raised up for this end, am I mistaken? Cannot I give evidence of it? That evidence, however, will not appear to you who expect the kingdom of God in the way it does not come,—with outward show. Taking the Bible in my hand, I observe this marked distinction between God's operation in judgment and in mercy. In judgment great agencies are employed: in mercy, minute ones. In judgment the agencies are visible and sensible; in religion, they are secret and moral. When he destroyed Pharaoh, the elements of nature were employed as the instruments of his vengeance. When empires are subverted, the march of armies shakes the earth. In the operations of nature, and the dispensations of his wrath, all the effects are produced by adequate causes; but it is not so in the work of mercy and salvation. He is raised up; but he delights to employ the weak to confound the mighty. Abraham, a Chaldean shepherd, restores the true religion; Moses, a boy taken from the waters, becomes the Jewish lawgiver; a few captives rebuild the temple; a Jewish peasant is the Lord's Christ; fishermen and tent makers turn the moral world upside down; a monk is the grand reformer of the western Church; and a few men, in our own day, pelted by every rabble, rouse the religious energies of Great Britain. Here is the hand of God, by things which are not, bringing to nought things that are. Where, then, is the proof that God is raised up for still greater purposes? See it in the spirit of religion, silently vivifying the moral principle in our towns and villages, collecting that mass of animate zeal and fervour here which is producing excitement in the torpid Christian world. See it in the deepened interest for the heathen world, and the numerous efforts which are made to bring all nations to the knowledge of Christ. See it in the augmented charity of Christianity. Heathenism, through all its millions of votaries, and leagues of country, cannot show such a spectacle as you see this day,—a poor widow dropping her two mites into your plate, to carry a blessing over oceans to a fellow creature. See it in the circulation of the Scriptures; and in the despised and ridiculed missionary going forth in the name of the Lord. God is raised up out of his holy habitation. Here we trace his march of mercy. His step is too soft to be heard by the world. While princes and cabinets sleep, the moral aspect of the world is changing. We hear his chariot wheels, though they hear them not, and pray,

“Triumphant Lord, appear.”

Let us now consider,

III. The impression which these extraordinary dispensations are calculated to make on the minds of those who observe them.

Silence is commanded; but silence in such a case is the result of powerful mental impression.

1. It is the effect of deep and intense interest.

I can conceive of nothing which can awaken so powerful an inte-

rest in reflecting and pious minds, as the rising of God out of his holy habitation. In creation he is made manifest but for a moment. He said, "Let there be light; and there was light." The work was done. After the world was formed, the Deity as it were retired to his habitation, and upheld its frame by a silent and invisible operation. Here we have God in continued action through successive ages, and only occasionally making himself more manifest, to intimate that he has been carrying on his plans. What a scene is disclosed through the successive dispensations of his religion, and the varied tracts and conflicts of his providence! See him, in every age, setting up one, and putting down another; now beaming forth in mercy, and now flaming with vengeance; now calling forth things that were not, and now confounding things that were. But the interest is heightened when we consider all this as a part of a grand process, to have its issues in events of the greatest possible concern to every individual and to the whole world. The perplexities and apparent confusion of its course only awaken in them a more powerful attention, and excite a stronger anxiety in the final developement. Obscurest darkness has been about him; he has drawn a cloud before the face of his throne; but the end cometh. He has long been travelling in the wilderness, in the greatness of his strength; but he now begins to urge his way in tracts more obvious, and in paths more straight. Let all flesh, then, keep silence before him, and watch the accomplishment of all that saints have hoped, and sinners dreaded; of all for which angels have looked out, and devils have trembled to anticipate; of all that for which the agony and bloody sweat, the bitter cross and passion, of the incarnate Son of God were endured. Let all flesh watch the result with breathless, fixed attention. God is raised up to complete his work. The cloud is rolling away from the scenes on which it has long rested; and the past is made legible by the light of the resplendent future. The animating voice of mercy rolls round the earth. The great trumpet is blown; and they that are ready to perish are coming forth at the signal of liberty. The dead begin to hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear him live. The nations begin to be blessed in him; and the nations in return call him blessed. With silent interest may we watch these wonders; or only break it to say, with trembling awe, "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations, and glorify thy name?"

2. Reproof produces silence.

When conviction of guilt is carried to the heart, every mouth is stopped before God; and such is the silence produced even in the Church by the rising up of God out of his holy habitation.

Unbelief is reproofed. In seasons of darkness, and times of moral decay, seldom indeed has the faith been found that has not staggered at the promise through unbelief. When Christ was asleep, and the wind was boisterous, and the vessel was ready to sink, the disciples began to be afraid. When the Saviour was raised up by their cries, he calmed the waves, and reproofingly said, "O ye of little faith, wherefore did you doubt?"

Complaint is reproofed. "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me." He rises up and cries, "I have graven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me;" and the silence of Zion confesses the shame of her distrust.

And when God, after long apparent delays, rises up out of his holy habitation, and appears in the greatness of his mercy and saving power, all those false conclusions we are so apt to draw from the darkness of his dispensations shall be reprov'd and silenced by his appearance. We then say, with Job, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no farther."

3. Satisfaction produces silence.

When every wish is gratified, and every desire fulfilled, all is silent and deep enjoyment. Such shall be the enjoyment of the Church, when her warfare is accomplished, and her triumphs are completed. Till then her cries must be heard; till then her prayers must ascend before God. She cannot look on a dark and wretched world, and not mourn. She has sheep that have been long wandering from the fold; and they are yet going astray. She has children that have long been absent from her house; and, like Rachel, she refuses to be comforted, because they are not. But the wanderers shall return; and she, beholding her sons coming from afar, shall cry with joy, "And these, where have they been?" Then comes the silence of satisfaction; and the joy is unutterable. Then, when David contemplates the perfecting of the redeeming scheme, and the universal establishment of the mild and gracious kingdom of Messiah, he has no more to ask. The voice even of his prayers ceases, and he exclaims, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. The prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended," Psalm lxxii, 18-20. He is content that the silence of death should succeed to the voice of prayer and mourning upon earth, that he might take up the song of heaven.

4. But all flesh, as well as the Church, is commanded to keep silence before him.

When the final displays of his interposition take place,—when in the sight of all the earth he is raised up out of his holy habitation, all flesh shall bow before him in the silence of complete submission. The din of the moral war shall cease; the shouts of blasphemous opposition shall be silenced; not a voice shall be heard among earth's millions, to cry, as of old, "Let us break their bands in sunder, and cast away their cords from us." For the glory of his majesty, not an enemy of Christ shall then dare to peep or to mutter. So softly, after a day of tempests and agitations, shall the evening of the world be lulled to rest; so calmly shall the stream of time, lashed and chased throughout almost the whole of its course,—now turned up by winds, now impelled by tides, and now roaring over cataracts,—sink, and glide into the ocean of eternity.

IV. But is the whole to issue in emotion? Certainly not. God is raised up out of his place, to raise us up from ours. When the work is done, we may give up ourselves to wonder, love, and praise: but, though we may admire and praise now, we must both pray and work. We are to be fellow helpers to the truth. The subject may impress us, with reference to our co-operation, two ways: first, it is our encouragement that God is "raised up out of his holy habitation;" and, secondly, it will render us inexcusable if we refuse.

1. If God is thus raised up, we have many encouragements to exertion.

We are clear in our cause. This is most important. The work in which we are engaged, when advancing the interests of Christianity, is the work and cause of God.

We have the Divine sanction. Do any persons ask our authority? We follow where God himself leads. We obey a command which he has given; we embrace opportunities which he supplies; and we rejoice in a success which is gained by his blessing. Our work, therefore, is not to be rebuked by worldly policy.

Prayer must be heard. When we pray for the blessing of God upon our labours, we ask nothing but what God has set his heart upon; and surely in this he is more ready to hear than we are to call upon him.

We shall not want co-operation. We need help in all the departments of our cause; we who preach to excite your zeal, and you who devise plans of usefulness, and provide the means of carrying them into practical effect. We shall not want missionaries; for the Lord of the harvest will thrust them forth. Nor shall we want fields of labour. These are already wonderfully opened. For, indeed, all is harmony in the Divine operations. He provides no minister without a people to hear him; and if that minister pause, a man of Macedonia shall say to him, "Come over, and help us." Some door shall be opened, or some call shall be heard, pointing out to him the will of his Divine Master.

We cannot want success. A cause must triumph that is supported by the Divine omnipotence. Checks and delays may occur in its progress; but the plan must run on to its accomplishment. To unbelief the battle may for a time appear doubtful; but victory is certain. You may hear difficulties suggested, and allow their force; but the assurance, that God is raised up out of his holy habitation is a sufficient answer to them all.

2. We shall be inexcusable, if we refuse to espouse this cause.

Deeply guilty is every man who refuses his aid. The Lord is risen; and this unfaithful servant is unwilling to follow. He deserts his standard; he disowns his cause; he buries his talent; he hardens his heart against the world's misery; he has no jealousy for his Lord's honour. He cannot say that "the time is not come." That plea of sloth has been taken away; for "the Lord is raised up." He cannot say that he has no special call to this work; for the call is most distinct, and the signal is given. He cannot say that he is unable to aid the cause; for it is served in every possible way. Yes; every professor of Christianity who declines to assist this cause is as inexcusable as Peter would have been, had he refused to go to Cornelius; as Paul, if he had refused to go into Macedonia; as all the disciples, if they had refused to execute their Lord's commission.

You may refuse your help; but if you will not arise, and be workers together with God, your own religious advantages will be placed in jeopardy, and he will ultimately remove your candlestick out of its place. But this I cannot anticipate. You are a people prepared for the Lord; and you inquire of him, "What wouldest thou have me to do?"

“ Behold the servant of the Lord,
 I wait thy guiding eye to feel,
 To hear and keep thy every word,
 To prove and do thy perfect will.”

Well, then, join the universal Church; fall into the ranks; gird on your armour; eye your signal; and when Providence opens an opportunity to aid this great cause, embrace it, and you do the work assigned you. When shall it be that the universal Church shall be put into harmonious motion, moving to one common object? The time is hastening; a goodly band is united already, and its number is increasing. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;” and they shall move on to victory. O yes; the Lord is raised up to glorious war; and let all the earth keep silence before him.

Infidels, keep silence. You have said, “Where is the promise of his coming?” You have derided the prophecies, and disregarded the power of the Gospel. Behold, then, that, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, its power is unabated, and monuments of its saving efficacy are erected in every land that it has visited, carrying salvation along with it, as it did at first. It has survived your scoffs and subtleties, while you are covered with shame.

Heartless professors of religion, keep silence. Christianity, which you so greatly dishonour, is all heart and feeling. Never have you opened your lips but to check the ardour and repress the efforts of your fellow Christians. We surround you with the converted slaves of our western colonies, regenerated savages of America, the reclaimed idolaters of the eastern world; and we ask whether God has not himself sanctioned the work which you would have bound and fettered with the chains of your icy objections? Let those keep silence who have triumphed in the retrograde condition of Christianity after the first ages, and have asked, “How can that be Divine which has failed of its purpose to convert the world?” Little do you know of those secret energies, those exhaustless powers, which, after ages of dormancy, begin now to unfold themselves. From that handful of corn has been produced a harvest to sow all countries. From that single beam of light, which you have seen only on the horizon of the western world, shall burst a flood of splendour which shall overspread the earth. Like the inhabitants of Ai, you have shouted when Israel turned their backs; but you see not Joshua giving the appointed signal. “The captain of the Lord’s host stretches out his spear;” the tide of flight is stopped; and the city is taken.

The Lord will silence the taunts of devils, who have so long revelled in the darkness and misery of the pagan world. Jesus ye know, and Paul ye know. Even in your choicest seats that voice is again heard, at whose sound of old ye came forth and fled.

“The oracles are dumb,
 No voice or hideous hum
 Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiving:
 Apollo from his shrine
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the step of Delphos leaving.”

Let the noise of those unhallowed multitudes be hushed, who surround the forms of Baal. Go, convicted of your sin, and cast your

idols to the moles and to the bats; and hide you in the holes of the rocks, to weep that you have done that abominable thing which God hateth, having changed his glory, and defied his name.

He shall silence the shrieks of burning widows, and the cries of imolated children. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation." In him they shall find mercy.

"Let all flesh keep silence before the Lord; for he is raised up out of his holy habitation." But the silence shall be broken. The sigh of penitence shall break it. The world shall lay its broken and contrite heart before the Lord; and he will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and remember their sins and iniquities no more. The sounds of praise shall break the silence. The voice of joy shall be heard in the tabernacles of the righteous; and it shall be taken up by a strain high above the rest; a strain which all the earth shall hear; a strain at which hell shall tremble through all her deeps; a strain which shall awake every harp in heaven, and every tongue on earth: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

SERMON LXXIX.—*All Nations blessed in the Seed of Abraham.*

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice," Gen. xxii, 18.

WHATEVER God does is done in wisdom. This is always so, whether we are able to perceive it, or not; but in the history with which the text is connected, it is instructively apparent. One design of the call of Abraham was the separation of his posterity from surrounding nations: and when we recollect this, we shall at once see the wisdom of placing a man like him at the head of this peculiar people. They were thus called to look, as to an example, to one who forsook all idolatrous practices, believed with so lofty a faith, and submitted so implicitly to the command of God. That Abraham was their father, must have kept the standard of faith and morals much higher than under different circumstances. And there is another view of the case. It was likewise the design of God to exhibit to the ancient Church, and to preserve in it, the doctrine of justification. Now, we may see the Divine wisdom in exhibiting this doctrine, not merely by figurative promises and typical sacrifices, but in a personal instance, and that instance, the founder and head of the Hebrew race. In him the doctrine appears almost without a veil. "And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness."

The words of the text were pronounced on a very memorable occasion,—just after Abraham had shown the strength of his faith by offering up, virtually, the child of promise. His faith had long been tried by waiting for the fulfilment of the promise, till, in the course of nature, it could no longer be expected. And then, when this his only son was growing up to youth, and He who gave him required that he should be offered in sacrifice, he nevertheless believed that the word

of the Lord could not fail; "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead."

In honour of this faith the promise is repeated with greater explicitness. "In thy seed,"—thus surrendered to me, and now given back,—"in thy seed,"—that is, in one eminent person to spring up from thy posterity,—"in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

Some, indeed, have interpreted these words as though they simply meant that the Gentile nations should derive great advantages from the preservation of true religion among the descendants of Abraham, and that it should spread from them among all people. Now, though this is true, yet it falls below the emphatic meaning of the text. The solemnity of the occasion on which the words were uttered will establish this. They were spoken just after the patriarch, in intention, had offered up Isaac, and received him again from the dead "in a figure:" in a word, just after an exact representation of the death and resurrection of God's own beloved Son had been made to his faith. When his mind was filled with thoughts of the Messiah, then was it said to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." There must have been, therefore, a reference to Christ. And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, puts the matter beyond doubt, and takes it out of the reach of all criticism. "Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The meaning of the text is, that in Christ, in the Messiah, who was to be born of the seed of Abraham, all nations shall be blessed.

To this great promise, in which we and the whole world are interested, we direct your attention. I shall consider,

I. Some of the reasons for giving this description of the Messiah: "the seed of Abraham."

1. Christ is called the seed of Abraham because he was to assume human nature; to be truly man; a man like ourselves.

We cannot, indeed, doubt that even the text presents him to us under the aspect of Divinity, supreme and absolute Divinity; for can it be said of any creature that all nations shall be blessed, made happy, in him? A stream of blessing so large and copious can only issue from a source opened in the bosom of Divinity itself. Nevertheless, this Divine person was to be incarnated, to become the seed of Abraham; that is, man; for so the apostle fixes its application; the nature of angels in opposition to the seed of Abraham. What, then, was the great reason for the incarnation? Why must he who is so truly Divine take on him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham? He was thus "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death," "that through death he might depose him that had the power of death, even the devil." If, therefore, we are thus to connect the death of Christ with the expulsion from man of the powers of Satan and all the spirits of darkness, the conclusion is irresistible, that that death was no common death. It was sacrificial, opening to mankind, by virtue of its merit, its propitiating quality, the gates of eternal life. Let it be impressed on our hearts that not one of us could have been blessed, that none of the nations of the earth could have been blessed, unless Christ had died as a sacrifice for sin. The absolute necessity

for this is very strongly, and by a most beautiful figure marked by our Lord. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,"—except it undergo the process of vegetative dissolution,—"it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He spake this with reference to his own death. If Christ had not died, he would have abided alone in his kingdom; his throne had never been surrounded by redeemed men and women, ascribing glory and dominion to "Him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood." No such song as this could have been heard in heaven; he would have remained alone. But he died, and brings forth much fruit. Ever since, that fruit has been springing up, the fruit of blessedness from the grave of Christ. All our pardon, all our strength, all our sanctity, all our hope, have germinated from his death; and continually are new blessings springing up, and spreading themselves over all the nations of the earth.

2. Christ was called the seed of Abraham, that additional evidence of his claims as Messiah might be given when he came into the world.

This was one great reason of this particular limitation of his descent. First, the promise was general. The seed of the woman is to bruise the serpent's head. This did not direct men to any particular family for the birth of their great Deliverer. But afterward it was limited to the family of Abraham; and subsequently, farther limitations were declared, to the line of Isaac, to the family of Jacob, to the tribe of Judah, to the house of David. The ancients of the earth had not to say, "Lo, here is Christ, or, Christ is there." If he came at all, he was to appear in Palestine, and to be the seed of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Judah, of David. And it is a circumstance worth note, that among all who have been born of woman since the beginning of the world, no other has ever pretended to be He in whom all nations were to be blessed. The false Christs among the Jews only proposed to deliver their own people, not to bless mankind. Of all these countless millions no one but Jesus of Nazareth has ever claimed to be the person here promised; and in him all the required marks meet. He was of the seed of Abraham, of the line of Isaac, of the family of Jacob, of the tribe of Judah, of the house and lineage of David.

3. There is a third reason why he is called, why, in fact, he was made, the seed of Abraham.

There is, after all, a peculiar relation between Christ and the Jews, as his brethren after the flesh. God has long been scattering blindness and pain upon Israel, but the hope of Israel is here. In the Old Testament he is represented as the husband of his people; and even of that adulterous generation he asks, "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement?" There is no ground to conclude that the covenant with Abraham has ever been finally dissolved, and therefore shall the sons of Jacob be again gathered. And let it be remembered, that Christ is the natural heir to the throne of David. The promise is, "I will give to him the throne of his father David, and he shall sit upon it;" and by no allowable interpretation can that promise be applied to any thing short of such an acknowledgment of Christ, as was rendered to God under the Old Testament. Long, therefore, as the throne of David has been cast down, and dishonoured in the dust, it shall be

reared up again ; reared up by the Son of David in the latter day, and he shall sit upon it, and rule his kingdom in righteousness and judgment. The Jews, converted to the faith of Christ, shall again be gathered, nor shall this excite any jealousy in the Gentile Church, to which even richer blessings shall then come ; “for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead ?”

II. Let us now consider the import of the declaration, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

The great question here is, in what manner it was intended that the Messiah should thus convey a universal benefit ? Not, it should seem, by changing the order and character of the seasons, and rendering them more propitious. Not by removing the curse that has fallen on the earth in consequence of the transgression of the first man. Not by removing pain and sickness, and death, from the human race, the consequence of sin, and of Satan’s malice. Not by communicating a scientific revelation in order to improve human intellect, and so to increase man’s prosperity and happiness. Not directly, and in the first place, to communicate any blessing, merely temporal, to the nations of the earth. He had other and higher ends ; and for the discovery of these we shall not err in arguing from the past to the future. The promise, in its full extent, is not yet fulfilled. All nations are not yet blessed in Christ. For eighteen centuries he has been administering the mediatorial government, and blessing men by the exercise of mercy, and the communications of grace and truth. It is thus that both individuals and nations have been already blessed ; and thus will he continue to execute his government till he has fully accomplished this declaration, And all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.

I shall endeavour to illustrate the subject by considering, in the first place, what there is in the religion of Christ calculated to bless mankind ; secondly, what Christianity has actually done in the promotion of human happiness ; and, thirdly, how this encourages our hopes as to the full and glorious accomplishment of the promise. First, we have observed that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is appointed to bless all nations by the communication of his religion to them. What is there, then, in that system of religion, by which mankind is thus to be blessed, adapted to this high purpose ?

1. In the first place, there is its divinely revealed truth.

Truth not resting upon the opinions of men, however just ; nor upon the investigations of human intellect, however acute and profound ; but upon the authority of the ever-blessed and infinitely wise God, who is all light, and in whom darkness and error can find no place. Now, religious truth is intimately connected with human happiness, because necessary to sound human morals. This observation, I allow, would be of no force, were we to admit the opinion that religious truth is matter of mere speculation, and that right sentiments were of no real importance. It has, indeed, been said, and is often repeated,

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

I am no advocate for contending for faith by force. God never appointed that men should fight for the faith, nor does he employ grace-

less zealots to promote his merciful plans among men : but that the principles which a right life involves may exist independently of a right faith, is, in fact, utterly false, and contradicted by all history. I shall not, however, meet this mistake by argument, but by the simple exhibition of two undeniable facts. The first, that in proportion as the various nations of the earth turned from the original revelation of God did they become corrupt in their morals ; and as their ignorance increased, so likewise did their depravity. The second, that wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached, or, in other words, wherever the original revelation has been restored with all the additions it has since received from its great Author and Source, there have religious principles been implanted in the minds of thousands to whom they were before unknown, and to a large extent the whole mass of society has been moralized. In proportion to the spread of Divine truth has been the elevation of the moral standard. The reason of this is obvious. There is no authorized religious truth in the world, but in Christianity. All else is conjecture ; this only is sealed and authenticated by Heaven. And the whole of this truth is made to bear on holiness. Every doctrine, every precept, every applauded example, goes to this ; and both joys and terrors are brought from a future state to set the dictate home to every heart, that without holiness we cannot see the Lord.

Behold, then, the first way in which the Seed of Abraham proposes to bless us, by opening to our contemplation the truths of his holy religion. These we must read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, or the promised happiness will never come into our experience. Behold, too, the manner in which he blesses the nations of the earth ; not by suffering them to remain in their ignorance, but by spreading among them, by the preaching of his Gospel, the truth which dissipates their polluting errors, destroys their superstitions, and spreads life and purity all around.

2. The religion of Christ is calculated to produce human happiness, because it exhibits the divinely prescribed method by which the guilty may obtain pardon ; in other words, that great doctrine of human hope and joy, that of justification by faith in the atonement and intercession of the Saviour.

This is one of those interesting views which the great and inspired commentator, St. Paul, takes of this promise, and one of those meanings which he has taught us to find in it. So, in Galatians iii, 8, 9, he says, "And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Now, the intimate connection between the doctrine of justification by faith and human happiness, may be made out in few words. Lay it down as an undoubted principle, that every man on earth feels himself to be a sinner. In health, and in the occupations and enjoyments of the world, he may forget this ; but in the hour of solitude, and under the pressure of calamity and sickness, and the near approaches of death, the feeling is anew wakened up, and produces the most gloomy apprehensions of the future. The comment we have on this, in the case of the heathen, is extremely affecting. All nations have had their methods of propitiation, because

they have had a sense of guilt, and an apprehension of danger ; but their propitiations had no authority, and therefore they could yield no peace. On the contrary, the absence of the doctrine to which we now refer, because of the rejection of former revelations,—the want of information where they may find a sacrifice of sufficient efficacy to wash away their guilt, a blood of sufficient sanctity to obliterate every polluting stain,—has led to abominations and miseries innumerable. To this are we to ascribe their long pilgrimages and torturing penances ; to this, the human sacrifices, and other sanguinary rites which have in all ages stained the polluted altars of the Gentile world, and which still abound in heathen countries to an extent at which the humanity of Christians stands aghast. Because they had lost this great truth, they fell into all those gloomy superstitions which, by a natural reaction on their own minds, rendered them callous in their feelings, hateful, and hating one another. And thus may the greatest miseries that have afflicted the nations of the earth be traced up to their original rejection of that grand doctrine, that God pardons the guilty through faith in the great Sacrifice which he himself has appointed. O how cheering was it to yourselves, when oppressed with the “ conscience of sins,” to be told of salvation, not by your own works of righteousness, for you felt you had none, but by the mercy of God through the atonement of his Son ; to hear those comfortable words of your Saviour Christ, “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest !” You have not to ask, “ Wherewith shall I come before the Lord ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams ?” The true propitiation is set forth. No heavy penalty, no toilsome pilgrimage, no torturing pains, are laid on thee. Thy sins were borne by thine incarnate Saviour ; and if thou art truly penitent, but this one command is laid on thee, “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Great shall be the joy of those broken hearts, those agonized spirits, in the suffering nations of the earth, when the veil of their moral blindness shall be rent, and the messengers of peace shall exclaim, “ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

3. In farther examining this Divine system, to discover its adaptation to human happiness, we find the great, the singular, promise of the Holy Spirit.

For, including this, also, in the blessing of which the text speaks, I have the authority of St. Paul, who, in the epistle already cited, has these words : “ That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” I have just called this a singular gift ; and so it is ; for, however our familiarity with this promise, in its various branches, may have prevented us from making the reflection, yet it is an idea, a hope, a privilege, peculiar to the dispensations of the true religion, and is found in no false one. There have been false Christs ; and some of them were distinguished by the range of their imagination, or the acuteness of their intellectual research ; but none of them, none who ever professed to give a religion to man, either raised his own thoughts, or the thoughts of his disciples, to a promise like this, the characteristic and glory of the Christian dispensation. It is the great promise of the Father ; and he himself to whom it refers is styled “ that Holy Spirit of promise.”

Consider, for a moment, what this gift includes ; and you will admit without hesitation, that that system through which it is imparted is indeed adapted, by the boundless mercy of God, to bless all the families of the earth. Wherever Christianity is preached, and its institutions are set up, there,—for Christianity is eminently the dispensation of the Spirit,—there all these institutions are surrounded as by an atmosphere of Divine light and power. Wherever the Gospel is preached, there is the Holy Spirit, moving and acting upon the heart, putting man into a capacity to hear with profit, leading him to think of his way, and to turn to God. By him are our understandings enlightened ; by him, the wishes of our heart directed to things spiritual and Divine. He is the Spirit of repentance and prayer, and then the Spirit of faith ; taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to us, and enabling us to repose an entire trust in the great sacrificial offering for sin. He is the Spirit of adoption, witnessing pardon to our conscience, and changing us from glory to glory, till we are meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

O what a blessing is this ! God, sending forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts ! Upon many of you this blessing of Abraham has already come. That inward peace which you feel, those hopes in which you indulge, that strength by which you conquer evil, and continue in the performance of duty, are all so many comments on the text. And you have here one of the most powerful motives to induce you to labour for the universal spread of the Gospel. Wherever that Gospel goes, it is the same ministration of the Spirit.

4. Another adaptation to human happiness in Christianity is found in its explicit enforcement of those relative duties on which the welfare of society so much depends.

I select this particular class, because I think it must be obvious to every man of understanding and reflection, that, from the want of a clear and exact statement of the duties included in it, and especially from the want of sanction to them, even to the limited extent in which they had been ascertained, no small misery has been spread over the nations of the earth. I confess that when I consider the manner in which this sacred book provides for the regulation of human conduct in social life, I am so deeply impressed with its divinity, that, putting all other arguments out of sight, this alone would make a strong appeal to my faith. If any person had been required to say how many volumes would have been necessary to point out the various duties which man owes to man ; how extensive the code which should have recognized every relation, and met every case ; the natural answer would have been, “I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” But, with majestic simplicity, with the efficiency of an all-comprehending wisdom, it is here done in a few pages. The duties are ascertained with an adaptation to all countries, times, and circumstances ; and they are all stated with the highest and most commanding sanctions. Kings here learn lessons of just and gracious rule ; subjects, of respect and obedience. The foundations of all wise jurisprudence are found here ; nor is there a general principle of truly enlightened legislation which does not flow from this source. Commands of moderation and equity to masters, and of conscientious honesty and submission to servants, have here their place. Parental tenderness is

here divinely blended with parental authority; and, on the conjugal relation, made so sacred, so hallowed, in the religion of Christ, all the strength of moral obligation, and the elevating sentiments of piety, are added to the tender affections of our nature, strengthening, and making them permanent. And where a particular precept may be wanting, still in no case need we err, as even here we have the guiding light of some great principle.

Perhaps there is some particular meaning in the expressions first addressed to Abraham: "In thee shall all the *families* of the earth be blessed." The heathen world at no time presented a spectacle so instructive and delightful as that of a well-ordered Christian family. I never visit a family regulated on the principles of the Gospel without the most powerful and pleasing impressions. The heathen world, I repeat, never witnessed a spectacle so sacred, so peaceful, so dignified, so much resembling every thing that is delightful in heaven, as that of a Christian family, governed by the laws of Jesus Christ. Happy will it be for the world when all its families are thus governed.

Between this view of the religion of Christ, and the happiness of the nations of the earth, you will see the connection. Suppose every throne established in the righteousness of the Gospel, and adorned with its mercy; all subjects affectionately obedient, obeying not for wrath, but for conscience' sake; all masters thus just and equal, and all subjects discharging thus their duty; the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, thus hallowed and sustained;—suppose all this, and you see what both reaches and removes the greater portion of human misery. Suppose all this, and you have only to add the removal of disease and death, to make earth the very image and likeness of heaven.

5. The last of these adaptations is, the kind and merciful spirit of the Gospel.

Had we time, we might dwell long upon this. In every page the benignant spirit breaks forth in commands that injuries be forgiven, malice and hatred put away, and our enemies prayed for and loved. But I will confine myself to only one topic selected from many,—that of kindness to the poor. In no false religion has there been any direct provision for this. O no! It was left to the Seed of Abraham to introduce a religion which should set itself directly, and with all the sanctions of eternity, against unkindness, and oppression, and slavery; and open the door of mercy to every creature under heaven. This is very strikingly illustrated by facts. Every traveller who has visited the ruins of the distinguished cities of Grecian or Roman states, has been anxious to copy the inscriptions found on fragments of columns, and other relics of public buildings. In these ruins they have found the splendid remains of amphitheatres, and temples, and palaces, and mausoleums, and triumphal arches; but on no fragment has an inscription yet been found telling us that that fragment belonged to an hospital, or any institution for the supply of human want, or the removal of human misery. And there is another important fact, which strikingly marks the Gospel as being essentially the religion of mercy. I mean that this character has been retained in the midst of error and perversion. Even where its doctrines have been corrupted, and its simple yet impressive worship almost exterminated by the inventions of men,

yet, even in these ages of darkness and corruption, and even oppressive persecution, it never lost its character for mercy. The vital pulse was not extinct; and that ever beat to the voice of distress. This is only to be accounted for by the strength of the original impression, kept up by the discourses that told to the heart, in tones of tenderness, of the sufferings and sorrows of Christ, and called men to love and help each other, because He who was rich had, for their sakes, become poor, that they through his poverty might be rich.

Thus viewing the character and tendencies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I ask you, whether, when this Gospel shall be communicated to all nations, it shall not be an instrument and source of happiness to them all?

Secondly. What I have to say on the next point, that this blessing has already been conferred, in no inconsiderable degree, on a large portion of mankind, must necessarily be brief; but it must not be passed over, because it meets what might otherwise be regarded as an objection. It might be asked, Is not all that has been said rather a splendid theory addressed to our hope, than a description of any thing actually realized? Eighteen centuries have passed away since the Seed of Abraham came to bless the nations of the earth; and, during their course, what has been done? What benefits have been conferred on those nations that have received this religion as derived from him? This is a question that must be answered, though I cannot now dwell upon it at full length. But, before I answer it, I must at least advert in passing to the spiritual blessings which come upon mankind through the Seed of Abraham. "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." The actual results of this in the salvation of men is a subject on which, at present, we know but in part. Perhaps John, when looking at the multitude of them who were redeemed from the earth, looked to a period not much posterior to our own; and he says that these redeemed ones were a multitude which no man could count; so that the voice which he heard from heaven was as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder. And forget not how large a portion of the human race die young; and for all children dying before the years of accountableness, Christianity declares that a provision has been made. Yes. The Seed of Abraham has provided for all those who break away without a contest; he takes them into a world in which all their powers shall be developed, and in which they shall remain the children of God for ever. This is the reason assigned by Christ himself that we are not to despise one of these little ones, "For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels," their disembodied spirits, "do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Let every mother who has consigned her infant to an early tomb hear this, and be comforted.

But to return to the temporal condition of men. And when we ask what Christianity has done to promote human happiness, considered under this aspect, we are not to forget that as yet it has but a very limited application even in what are called Christian countries. The name is borne, but the full system is very partially either received or applied. But then this strengthens our argument. If it can be shown that even under this limited application of Christian truth, to whatever nation the Christian religion comes, it brings unnumbered blessings of

no ordinary character, then may we justly entertain the most delightful anticipations as to the result of a full and faithful communication, and an unrestricted reception of Christianity, among all the nations of the earth.

Limited as I am on this subject, which itself might occupy many discourses, perhaps the most effectual way of bringing it before you will be to take one of the proudest, most polished, and intelligent nations of antiquity, and bring a few points of its moral and civil condition into comparison with nations as yet but imperfectly Christianized. This surely is fair. We give you Rome, imperial Rome, in all her pomp and power, all her science and refinement, on the one hand; and on the other, our European nations, whose Gothic rust is not yet all burnished off, and through which, as the leaven of Christianity is but imperfectly spread, the effects of Christianity are but partially developed.

Consider the Roman empire in its relation to other states. A more unjust, aggressive, and ferocious power was never permitted to scourge the earth. Almost all their wars were grossly iniquitous: and Daniel described their oppressive rule with the accuracy of an historian, as the "fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it." Partially as Christianity has influenced the nations that have received it, yet never has Christendom reared and fostered a power at once so subtle, rapacious, and merciless. The temple of Janus in Rome, which was always open in time of war, was shut but thrice, and that only for very short intervals, in seven hundred and twenty-six years. And war itself, awfully common as it has been, has had its rugged aspect softened by Christianity. Its carnage in ancient times was horrible; and the vanquished who fell were far happier than they who survived, and who were usually doomed to cold-blooded massacre, or perpetual slavery. The first Christian emperor, Constantine, imperfect as his Christianity might be, had yet learned mercy from the Gospel. He commanded his soldiers to have mercy on their prisoners, and offered ransom for those whom they preserved. And there is a public act in our own modern annals which deserves note. The distinguished general who defended Gibraltar received the thanks of both the English and Irish parliament for his great humanity to the enemy. Such a public record cannot be paralleled in any heathen state that ever existed. A Greek writer and warrior expressed but the common sentiment when he said, that "to glut our souls with the cruellest vengeance upon our enemies, is the most exquisite pleasure that the human mind can taste."

Go to their seats of law and judgment. And to give you a specimen: in the celebrated law of the twelve tables there was a provision respecting the insolvent debtor, that, after sixty days' imprisonment, whatever the circumstances of the case might be, the principal creditor might put him to death, and dividing the body into as many pieces as there were creditors, send each a share of his victim. And even where the law was good, the execution was uncertain or bad. Their courts of justice presented a continual scene of open and undisguised iniquity; and the unhappy man who had not the means of bribing the judges was sure to have their decision against him.

Look at the mass of the people : they were in a state of slavery, the absolute property of stern and lawless masters. It was not uncommon for a Roman citizen to have several thousands of slaves. The porter at the gate was a slave in chains. The men who tilled the fields tilled them in chains. The master had the power of life and death, and of torture, which he often inflicted for his own amusement. Against this horrid system our Divine religion at once set itself; first to mitigate the condition of the slave, and then to release him from his chain; and, after a long contest, brought the system of domestic slavery to a close. What an act of homage was paid to Christianity whenever, according to ancient custom, slaves were liberated at the altar, as an act well pleasing to God, who has made of one blood all nations, and by one Saviour has redeemed all !

Then there are their public sports and games. These too remind us of the blessings conferred by Christianity in delivering nations from the ferocity of heathenism. You have heard how usual it was to assemble men together in their theatres to fight with each other till one or both was slain. But have you reflected on the extent to which this systematic delight in blood and murder was carried ? These games for the amusement of the Roman people, of even the tenderer sex too, frequently occasioned the sacrifice of twenty thousand lives ! These were at length abolished, but it was by the decree of a Christian emperor.

Let us look into their domestic circle ; and even there did the diabolical spirit of paganism intrude, filling almost every house with discord and cruelty. In almost every case the husband was the harsh tyrant, the wife the degraded slave, to be divorced on the most trivial occasions. Even in what are called the purest ages of Greece and Rome, female infants might be put to death ; and any, whether male or female, if sickly or deformed. The first Christian emperor checked the practice by ordering all children abandoned by their parents to be kept at the public charge ; and the mercy of the Gospel triumphed at last by its entire suppression.

And, finally, for we cannot enlarge on this awful detail, look at some of their most lauded characters. Nothing, indeed, shocks one so much, nothing so much shows by what a low and debased standard the Romans determined what is virtuous and vicious, as the praises bestowed upon some of the most detestable wretches that ever bore the human form. Many instances might be given, but one must suffice. All their writers are lavish in the praise of Titus ; the mild, the merciful Titus ; the very darling of mankind, as he was called. And yet the cruelties exercised by him upon the conquered Jews are almost incredible. In the war which terminated in the capture of Jerusalem, almost a million and a half of Jews were slain, and the remainder were sold as slaves. Eleven thousand were suffered to die of hunger ; countless numbers were slain in the public spectacles he exhibited ; and in one city, in one day, fifteen hundred in honour of his brother's birth day. He was the great instrument, most certainly, in the hands of Providence, for the punishment of a wicked race ; but the shame and guilt of his cruelty remain on his own head. If such were the saints of pagan Rome, what, then, were her devils ? Remember, too, that this power once extended over all Europe ; and that under such influences, still farther

embruted by Gothic barbarity, but for Christianity, we should have continued to this day. O thanks to the Seed of Abraham who has saved us from these scenes of blood! Thanks to him that we have not our mourning fathers, and mothers, and children, weeping for their slain! Thanks to him for the peace in which we dwell in this land of light and mercy! And thanks to him for all spiritual blessings; for the gift of the Holy Ghost: for his Sabbaths and ordinances; for a happiness which can only terminate with immortality and eternity!

I proposed lastly, to show you how all this went to encourage our desires and hopes for the full and glorious accomplishment of the declaration, that in the Seed of Abraham all nations of the earth should be blessed. But here time warns me to be brief.

How much even Christian nations need the full and effectual blessing of the Seed of Abraham is so manifest that, while we rejoice in what has been done, we are called, by every consideration of piety and patriotism, to be more earnest and diligent for the triumphant spread of religion, in all its truth and power, throughout Christendom. But when we look into the regions beyond, where Christ is not named, how pressing do the wants of the people appear! Has the Gospel truth? And do they not need it? Look at the fact, that the idea of God, Creator, Preserver, Ruler, and Judge, is absent from their mind. Has it the promise of pardon? Let their vain attempts to propitiate imaginary deities by torturing penances plead their cause with us. O draw aside the veil; and, with an emphasis becoming those who feel they have themselves obtained mercy, cry to them, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Has it the promise of the Holy Spirit? Do they not need that? Behold their millions "dead in trespasses and sins!" What shall give them life but the breath of God? When he breathes upon these slain, then shall they live. Behold them obdurate, worldly; their hearts the seat of every impure and cruel passion. What can meet their wants but the Spirit of holiness? What an assemblage of graces follows in his train! There is love, and joy, and peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance: graces, these, whose existence no heathen heart feels, whose manifestation and prevalence no heathen land exhibits. Have we a Divine rule which marks right and wrong, and especially enforces all the lovely and peaceful duties of social life? And is it not needed by them? The very idea of virtue seems to have faded from their mind, and all is confusion and wretchedness. Send its precepts to their judges, and teach them justice; to the people, and teach them peace and mutual love. Soften the cruel master. Give consolation and freedom to the slave. Say to their widows, "Thy Maker is thy husband." Throw the shield of affectionate justice before their orphans, and shelter them from oppression and ruin. In the bosoms of husbands and wives raise that true affection which alone can consecrate their union. Give the dignity of virtue to paternal command; and teach the mother not to "forget her sucking child;" teach her to have compassion on the son of her womb. Is our Gospel embodied mercy? Does it continually present the affecting spectacle of the love of a crucified Saviour; the softened, entendering scenes of his generous sufferings in our stead? O send it abroad! That only can quench the hell of malice, revenge, and uncharitableness, by the constant moral

which it furnishes: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." For heathenism retains its indestructible character of cruelty. Witness the massacres and cannibalism of the South Seas. Witness the sanguinary superstitions of Africa, in some nations more destructive even than their wars. Witness the infanticide of China and India; the burning of widows, both in the tender bloom of youth, and the venerable dignity of declining years. But follow them into another world. O heart-rending thought! For, speculate as we may, I see it recorded in this sacred page, "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Send them the Gospel which shall tell them that Christ, having "overcome the sharpness of death, has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

Yes, in the Seed of Abraham, in the great Deliverer, the nations shall be truly and richly blessed. His truth shall shine forth, and spread its sublime scenes to the gaze of an adoring world. Every where shall his salvation be proclaimed. The influences of his Spirit, like the refreshing light and air of the morning, shall cover the whole earth. In him shall all the families of the earth be blessed, and delightful spectacles of social harmony be displayed in every land. The flow of human blood shall be stayed by him. Over the regions of misery he shall pursue his march of mercy, raising the fallen, liberating the captive, breathing his peace and purity into every heart, and collecting every where the voices of grateful nations into one loud and deserved acclaim: "Our Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is his name." All nations shall be blessed in him: "All nations shall call him blessed."

SERMON LXXX.—*The Day of Visitation.*

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix, 42.

OUR Lord "came unto his own, but his own received him not." For ages had the Jews been looking for the Messiah; and now that he comes to them, they hide their faces from him, and esteem him not. And this was too much the case throughout the whole course of his public life. You would have expected more than a hundred and twenty disciples after a four years' ministry; but so it was. In Jerusalem especially he was treated with hostility and obloquy. There he had preached his most affecting sermons; wrought there, or in the neighbourhood, some of his most stupendous miracles; there silenced capacious objectors. Yet all failed to penetrate hearts encrusted with the love of the world, or to convince men determined not to renounce their errors. But these base actions did not extinguish the compassions of his heart. He was now going up to Jerusalem for the last time; and when he drew near to the city, he wept over it, and said, "If thou hadst known, even thou;" a passionate form of expression, implying the most earnest desire,—O that thou hadst known! "but now they

are hid from thine eyes ;” already hidden by thine own perverseness, and about to be hidden from them judicially.

These words are left on record for our solemn meditation ; and, that I may assist your thoughts, let me point out the three great subjects which the text sets before us.

I. The doctrine of Christ, rejected by the Jews, is that which, in the most emphatic sense, belongs to our peace.

II. The time in which it is proposed to us is, our day, our day of visitation.

III. The case of those who neglect the opportunity thus afforded them is one of deep and painful commiseration.

I. The Jews rejected the doctrine of Christ, and in so doing rejected their true peace.

It was for this that they were punished, and that the wrath came upon them to the uttermost. The same takes place in our own day. It is the same doctrine that is rejected, and, with it, the things that belong to our peace. It will not be difficult to show that every part of the doctrine of Christ which the Jews rejected is of this character.

1. He proposed to them no temporal blessings, and they were offended in him.

They looked for a kingdom, and he brought them one of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. They panted for power, and he promised a moral dominion over their own passions. They thirsted for conquests over their enemies, and he presented to their view no trophies but those won from the powers of darkness, and a regenerated world. They grasped at wealth, and he held out to them the inheritance of heaven. These spiritual blessings they contemned, and, along with them, the Messiah by whom they were offered. Yet, how fatal was their mistake ! Not those things which they sought, but those they rejected, belonged to their peace. For had Christ endowed them with all they desired, peace and they had still been strangers. The world cannot give felicity to an unsanctified nature. A pure and devout mind may extract good from it, and make the creature a scale to the Creator ; but where that is not, there is no peace. Power converts men into tyrants ; riches become the instruments of vice ; health but gives vigour to corrupting passions ; and every unholy affection, thus ripened into maturity, under the fostering suns of prosperity, only serves to keep a heavier load upon the conscience, and quicken the fears by louder alarms of death and judgment.

2. Our Lord taught the doctrine of salvation by faith in himself ; as shedding his blood for the remission of sins.

This they rejected, as many do now, but they thus rejected that which belonged to their peace. He who seeks justification through the law, only increases his misery in proportion to his sincerity. The more he knows of the law, the clearer is the light in which he must view his own transgressions against it, his failures of exact obedience, and the threatened penalty of death. When the commandment comes, sin revives, and he dies. The only doctrine that can lead us to peace is that of Christ. He teaches us that we are saved by mercy ; mercy manifested in his own sacrifice. Faith in his blood brings the soul to a repose never known before. There is then the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

3. Our Lord taught the spiritual worship of God; another offensive doctrine to formalists in all ages.

With them, the regular observance of forms is in itself a meritorious service, and sufficient to invest a man with a character of merit and worth. The Jews were deeply involved in this error, and they were told that all this was but as nothing; that their goodly show was but vanity and sin. They rejected the humbling doctrine, and with it they rejected their peace. For, brethren, what is lip-service either to God or to us? What a wretched emptiness do all merely outward services leave in the mind! What is prayer without desire; praise without love; spirituality on the tongue, and a deadening worldliness in the heart? Spiritual worship alone is the mother of a peaceful mind. When God is approached as a Father; when the incense of praise is cast into the fire which love kindles upon the altar of the heart, and which is tended night and day that, like the fire of the sanctuary, it may never go out; when the soul that seeks God finds him, and prayer, humbly but pleadingly, takes hold upon the Angel, and says, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" then do we find high and holy exercises suited to our nature; things, in a word, which belong to our peace.

4. Finally: our Lord taught that religion was a practical thing, an affair of the heart and the life.

The Jews, like many in our own day, placed it in outward privileges and forms; and they rejected, with bitter hatred, the doctrine which led them into the state of their own hearts, that, by purifying these, all practical purity might follow. And yet, my brethren, see we not that then only can religion belong to our peace, when considered in the light in which our Lord placed it? What is there to promote our peace in a name, whether it be Jew or whether it be Christian? What is a son of Abraham without the faith of Abraham? a professor of Christ, without the spirit of Christ? So far is this from being a source of peace, that it is an aggravation of our guilt, and will finally heighten the emphasis of our condemnation. No. The source of peace can only be found in the religion of the heart; that which unites all the powers of judgment, memory, conscience, principle, and affection to God, and thus places them all under a sanctifying influence; that which purifies every thing outward, by purifying the principle in which it originates; that which produces words, not of imitative piety, but seasoned with grace, and bright with truth; actions, not of affected sanctity, but of sober worth, rooted in principle, and diffusing the natural fragrance which belongs to them. That God may approve of our religion, it must be pure and undefiled before him. We must walk with him, if we would have the testimony that we please him, and the sacred peace and joy which flow from it.

Sum up these things, my brethren, and be persuaded that the blessings offered by Christ to the Jews, and now offered to ourselves, are the things which, in the most emphatic sense, belong to your peace. He feeds not the dangerous appetite of the soul for earthly things by the offer of worldly good, but establishes his covenant upon better promises. He shed his blood for you and for many for the remission of sins, and he offers you this great result. He opens a way of access to your prayers, and renders them prevalent by his own intercession.

He places himself before you as your Redeemer from the tyranny of your sins, the world, and Satan. He begins and carries on to completion the great process of renewal in the heart, sheds abroad there his vital, sanctifying consolations, familiarizes the spirit of man to communion with God, and thus prepares him for that endless salvation in which the great work of redemption issues. I appeal to you, whether these be not the things which belong to your peace.

II. The time in which this heavenly, saving doctrine is proposed to us is our "day," the day of our visitation.

The reason of this expression is, that at such times the best and most favourable opportunity of salvation is afforded; and that, if these seasons are neglected, a punishment will follow, proportioned to the guilt. In this sense, days of special visitation are granted both to nations and to individuals.

1. To nations.

Thus had the Jews their day of visitation; nor did a brighter ever shine upon any people. The Son of God was incarnated among them, and appeared, surrounded with all the evidences of his Divine mission. The prophecies were all fulfilled in him. He was born of a virgin, and spoke to them as never man spoke. By his wonderful works were the words of Isaiah accomplished, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." Yet they rejected him; nor could even the prodigies of the crucifixion reprove them for their horrid deed. The darkened sun and trembling earth could make a Roman centurion exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God;" but not the harder nature of Pharisees and hypocrites.

But their "day" did not close there. There were the wonders of pentecost, and the preaching of the apostles, and the miracles which accompanied it. "Ah!" you ask, "how could they not believe?" And some infidels have even argued that, had the works really been wrought among them, they must have believed. They know not the mystery of iniquity, nor the perverseness of the human heart. As great a wonder occurs daily, perhaps even among yourselves. They saw, and did not believe; you believe, and neither love nor obey. Which is the greater mystery? The same causes were in operation then as now; even the love of sin, and the deluding spirit of the world.

All the Gentile nations, to whom the Gospel was preached on its rejection by the Jews, had their day of visitation. They had been suffered, for many reasons which it becomes not us to scrutinize, to walk for many ages in their own ways; but, doubtless, among those reasons, in awful punishment for the rejection of former light. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and therefore were they given up to their own follies. But in wrath, mercy was remembered. No prophet had appeared among them for ages. No ambassador from heaven had been sent to them. They had had no vision of holy things. But now their day of visitation comes, and men, sent of God, "go every where, preaching the word;" the word of life, the Gospel of Jesus the Saviour, the tidings of universal atonement, and of the promise to all founded upon it. Ambassadors for Christ visit them, authenticate their mission by miracles, and pray them, in Christ's

stead, to be reconciled to God. Glorious was the visitation ; but with it, in their case too, came the awful responsibility.

We, as a nation, are now in the very height of our gracious visitation. This is eminently our day. Early Christianity was but partially diffused among us ; and when it became more general, it was mingled with great superstition. The time of the reformation from popery was indeed a merciful visitation, and so were some subsequent periods ; but the mass of the people were ignorant and barbarous, without the Scriptures, and without the ability to read them. The case is altered now. Our own day is distinguished by four things,—the general preaching of the Gospel ; the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures, with ability to read them ; the outpouring of Divine influence ; and the exertions of spiritual people throughout the land, furnishing living comments upon the truth. O Britain, thou art indeed planted a noble vine ! This is the accepted time, the day of visitation, with thee. O that thou mayest know, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ; and that they may never be hidden from thine eyes !

2. But individuals, also, have their special seasons of visitation, which may be emphatically called their “day.”

There is our youth. Who can look into the circumstances of many of our young people without seeing in them the marks of a special day of visitation ? They are taught the Scriptures, and instructed in their meaning ; they live under the influence of pious parents, are habituated to religious ordinances, and familiar with conversations on the deep things of God. They can scarcely recollect a time when some sweet influence of the Holy Spirit was not moving their hearts ; scarcely a day has passed but they have experienced some check, or some gracious drawing. O, this is indeed your day ! I will not say, that you shall not have others, if you sinfully neglect this ; but you will have none so bright, none so favourable. Now you are “sweetly ignorant of ill.” Corrupt nature is not yet formed into sinful habits. You are not yet familiar with the sad acts of self-delusion, by which, at a subsequent period, you may be deceived and hardened. Should you ever be converted at a later period, after many acts of vice, or at least of carelessness, you will have a hard spiritual warfare with polluted imaginations ; with shadows of remaining error, darkening the judgment ; with strong habits, easily reassuming their former power over you. You may be saved ; but it will be with greater difficulty. Perhaps you will not be saved at all. O, young people, know the day of your gracious visitation.

Different persons will likewise be found, individually, to have their times of special visitation, their day. Here is one who comes from a part of the country where religious means are not so abundant, and has his lot cast in the midst of plenty. Here is one who is brought into more immediate connection with pious people, and who sees their holy lives and peaceful deaths ; one whom God visits with awakenings under some particular discourse or ministry ; one who is visited by afflictions and trials. Many are the circumstances which bring the things that belong to our peace warmly to our thoughts and to our hearts. Then is our day. Then is the hand of thy God upon thee for good. Know thou these things ; know them really ; know them practically.

III. The case of those who neglect these opportunities is a subject of deep and painful commiseration. So was it to our Lord; and so, in the more limited degree in which we can love and feel, it ought to be to us.

1. The Jews are an instance of this.

Our Lord looked upon the miseries of Judea and Jerusalem in prospect; to us they are an historical reality. And when we remember the terrible siege of Jerusalem by the Romans; the expulsion of her inhabitants; the proud mockery of her enemies; and the persecutions of those who have borne a name, once so venerable, but now so hated;—when we mark how applicable to this second destruction is the pathetic lamentation of Jeremiah's eloquence of woe, "How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger! The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof. The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn feast. Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord. All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?" Lam. ii, 1, 2, 7, 9, 15;—when we recollect all this, we may join in the words of our weeping Lord, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" Think, then, O thou that despisest the day of thy visitation, what shall the end be of all that obey not the Gospel of God!

2. The people among whom the primitive Churches were planted afford another affecting instance.

They show that God is no respecter of persons. "To them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." This the apostle makes the subject of solemn admonition: "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." And we have sad and affecting instances of this. Where are the Churches to whom St. Paul addressed his blessed epistles? Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, Thessalonica? They had their day, and for a time they improved it; but they grew weary of well doing; and, melancholy fact! not one remains at all; or remains only as a picture of spiritual decay and corruption. O, if the Apostle Paul could sigh amidst his felicities in heaven, he would sigh in tracing the contrast between the glorious monuments which his hallowed zeal left in Greece and the Lesser Asia, and the desolations of God's judgments, and the wastes of spiritual death, in

the same countries! The track of light which he left is darkened. Those Churches, once so distinguished by faith, and love, and conformity to the model of his own injunctions, that, when absent from them in body, he was present with them in spirit, joying and beholding their order, and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ, are now like the desert heath which never sees when good cometh. And if his spirit has glanced at their desolated cities, their base subjection to the false prophet, their utter extinction, or their dying life, more sad and affecting than death itself, he has a thousand times adopted the words of his Master, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!" These are the fearful monuments which God hath set up, to warn us by the fate of the Gentile Churches, as well as of the Jews, that we neglect not the day of our visitation.

3. But equally affecting instances are presented by individuals.

When men wilfully hide their eyes from the things which belong to their peace, there comes a twofold judicial hiding from them on the part of God.

The first is partial and temporary. The rejected light shines with feebler ray; the grieved Spirit takes a temporary departure; and at every act of resistance, a longer period of time intervenes before his return. And in this state of things, although the sentence has not passed which hides them for ever from the eyes, yet what melancholy scenes are presented! Many, whose hearts once received the whole truth, are now bewildered in the errors which they loved, and with which they trifled. Many, whose hearts often deeply felt, can now hear the most solemn truths without a salutary fear, and see proposed the most elevated blessings, without one aspiration after them. Many, who once held the world so loose, that some leisure, at least, was left for serious thought, seem at though they were transmuted into the very substance of the world which they love, and are as insensible to God as the base and dead elements on which they have fixed their hearts. Many are now slaves to vices and tempers of which, had it been prophesied that they should ever have had place in their hearts, and have stained their lives, they would have said, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Many who once knew God, and loved his people, are now in the ranks of the world, giddy and vicious as those with whom they mix, and far more miserable. Base apostates are they from their Saviour, and aliens from their former friends. When such instances pass before us,—and we see them but too frequently,—well may we say of each, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, the days of visitation; days which may return, but never under circumstances so favourable! O that in them thou hadst known the things belonging to thy peace!"

But the second case of judicial hiding is final and eternal. I do not think that this takes place before death; at least, I see no Scriptural authority for such an opinion; and no man, therefore, has the right to say so. But that day will come; and ah! could we unveil the mournful realities of the invisible world, what comments on the text would there be presented to us! There are the inhabitants of the old world, on whom, "the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah," but who "were disobedient." O for "a preacher of righteousness" now!

But no ; “they are hid from thine eyes.” There are the rebellious Jews, to whom God sent his prophets, rising up early and sending, but they would not hear. O for an Elijah, an Isaiah, a Jeremiah now ! But, “they are hid from thine eyes.” There are the men who, when the Son, the heir, came, said, “This is the heir ; come, let us kill him ;” and who treated the servants as they had treated the Master ; and for no other crime than this, that they disturbed their sleep of sin, and earnestly sought their salvation. O for a glance of the Saviour now, as when they heard him say, “And him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out !” O for a sight of Peter, once more saying, “Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come !” But no times of refreshing come. No repentance is there. These things are now “hid from their eyes.” And there, too, are the unhappy multitudes who, up to our time, have died without cordially embracing the Gospel, and accepting its offered salvation ; for this sad process of self destruction has been going on to this moment. And it is that I may, by God’s blessing, put some bar in the way of your following examples so fatal, that I bring these scenes before you. Survey, then, the miserable throng. There you will see many a youth who despised the example of a father, and the instruction of a mother ; many a delayer, who talked about the more convenient time, till his day of opportunity expired ; many a worldling, in whose heart the seed began to spring up, but the thorns choked it, and made it unfruitful ; many a trifler, who never made salvation a serious concern, and therefore took no steps to secure it ; many a one who has delighted in sermons, and comparing the gifts of preachers, who have been to them “as one who hath a pleasant voice, and playeth well upon an instrument,” but who were not heard as ambassadors for Christ, beseeching men to be reconciled to God ; many a one who has said, “Lord, Lord,” joined in our prayers, our psalms and hymns, but did not the things commanded them. But time would fail me to run over the classes of the children of disobedience and perdition. But whatever the class, looking on their hopeless misery, we may weep and say, “O that ye had known in your day the things that belonged to your peace, but which are now hid for ever from your eyes !” Yes : hid in judgment. No Sabbath shines on them ; no voice says to them, “Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord ;” no ambassador for Christ unfolds his message, and proposes terms of peace ; no gracious feeling springs up in the soul ; no Saviour pleads for them with God. The things belonging to their peace are hidden from them ; hidden for ever ; the day has closed ; the curtain has fallen ; the pleading voice of mercy is silent ; the wrath has come upon them to the uttermost ; all is darkness, all is despair. O that ye had known, even ye, in your own day, the things that belonged to your peace ! But it is too late ; they are now hid for ever from your eyes.

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Hear, then, the present message of God. Consider it well. Pray for the salvation revealed in the Gospel. Flee, without delay, from wrath to mercy.

SERMON LXXXI.—*Heaven.*

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful,” Rev. xxi, 3–5.

ALTHOUGH but few possess the learning and research necessary for the investigation of such parts of this book as may be accessible to human understanding, and though neither learning nor industry will suffice to open all its mysteries, it is, nevertheless, a book of deep and delightful interest to every true Christian. It not only contains the sublimest imagery, but the most important lessons; and though it is not for us to know the times and the seasons which the Father has put within his own power, yet may we here see how vain and short-lived are the triumphs of the rulers of the darkness of this world; how He that sitteth in the heavens laughs at their proud combinations; and what means he has at his command, to crush them beneath his feet, when the patience of his saints is fully tried, and the times fixed by his infinite wisdom are fully come. Mighty elements rush, mighty angels fly, to execute his vengeance; tumultuous earth sinks in trembling subjection; and the chain of his omnipotence at length binds the great deceiver and destroyer, that he shall deceive the nations no more. And surely, although we may fail to fix the dates, and to trace the order, of the events here made the subjects of prediction, yet we are all interested in knowing how that strife between the adverse powers of truth and falsehood, holiness and sin, which has continued for so many ages, shall at length cease. That strife, indeed, shall yet for a while continue. Yet shall our world be troubled with wars and desolations. Even in this book the stream of time lies before us, tossed with tempests, and darkened by lowering skies; but we are permitted to track it onwards, though sometimes its course may be obscured, till at length it settles into peace, brightens under the lustre of a cloudless heaven, and with calm, and deep, and solemn grandeur, falls into the ocean of eternity. Error and sin may for a time maintain the conflict; but truth and righteousness shall finally prevail, and the effect be quietness and assurance for ever.

But this is not only the book of time; it is likewise the book of eternity. Not only do the events of this world here rise before us, but the scenes of another. The dead rise, the throne of judgment is set, the books are opened; and then comes the doom of the wicked, then the glory of the just. Then is heaven opened; its very song falls on our ears; and fields of light and glory, the pure abodes of the sanctified, the eternal residence of redeemed men, are spread before us.

To this our text leads us; and that we may be instructed by it, that so the delusive charms of earth may be broken, and heaven have all our hearts, come and contemplate the three impressive views under which the future felicity of the saints is here revealed to us.

I. The tabernacle of God is with men.

II. They shall be his people, and he shall be their God.

III. There shall be an eternal exemption from the sufferings and sorrows of mortality.

I. The tabernacle of God is with men.

Throughout the whole book we find continual allusion to the temple service of the Jews. This furnishes some of its most striking symbols. Thus we have an altar, incense, priests clothed in white, cherubim, and the sacred presence of God. Bursts of sacred joy and harmony remind us that we are come to that Mount Zion of which the earthly one was the impressive type. Honour was still to be done to that ceremonial law, of which God was the author; and thus, with reference to the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, a great voice cries, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." That which was then typified is now fulfilled. We are taught by this,

1. That there shall be in heaven a special and visible presence of God.

So was it in the tabernacle and temple. God, invisible every where else upon earth, was there revealed. In Jerusalem was his dwelling, and his throne upon Zion. So shall it be in heaven, only with a display of glory corresponding to that perfect state which exists there. Heaven will not be a wide waste of space, where God is only to be apprehended by the exercises of pure intellect, and where we must "feel after him, if haply we may find him." "Yet in my flesh," said Job, "shall I see God." The glory is there to which our Lord was received, and which he had with his Father before the world was. Jesus is there bodily; and if nothing else gave locality to heaven, that would. There he is, enthroned in the centre of the infinite circumference of the Deity, the Lamb in the midst of the throne. And therefore "the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

2. This symbol of the tabernacle denotes the personal approach of the saints to God.

When we recollect the presence of God in the tabernacle, we have an explanation of phrases frequently occurring in the Old Testament: as, "It is good for me to draw nigh unto God;" and that passionate exclamation of David, "When shall I come and appear before God?" They who were in the tabernacle were near to God; and thus was the state of the blessed above typified of old. Happy, indeed, is the soul which communes with God on earth; but a sense of distance will still remain: we shall feel that we see through a glass darkly; and there will be earnest aspirations after higher bliss. "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," is the language of Paul. All that the body now hides from us we cannot tell; but we are sure that it hides God from us. While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. And thus feeling, a spiritual instinct urges us on, kindling earnest desire in the soul till the distance is annihilated, the wall of partition falls down; and being "absent from the body," the spirit knows what it is to be, in the very highest sense, "present with the Lord." And then shall that animating declaration of the psalmist be fulfilled in a degree which cannot be known in this world: "Blessed

is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts : we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."

3. The allusion to the tabernacle instructs us, that part of the felicity of the saints in heaven shall consist in the worship of God.

And who would wish it to be otherwise? Could we find a man who would exclude from his idea of this place of blessedness, the eternal, ceaseless worship of his God, I would deny to him all claim to a single ennobling thought : that by itself would prove his total want of preparation for the kingdom of God. But it is not so ; the tabernacle of God is with men, and to that they shall bring the homage of their hearts, and the tribute of their praises. So in the tabernacle of old : the sin offerings, the peace offerings, the thank offerings, were all brought there ; and with a variety of instruments and voices the praises of God were there sung. There, especially, were sung the songs which the sweet psalmist received from the inspiring Spirit ; songs, indeed, containing "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," and which to our own day retain all their animation and power. It was this which made David say, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." And, when distant from it, he envied even the birds which found shelter in the sanctuary, were covered by its shadow, and cheered by its sounds. And have we not felt the inspiration of worship ourselves? Wherever God is devoutly adored, feelings at once the strongest and the richest are called forth, from

"The speechless awe which dares not move,
And all the silent heaven of love,"

to the thanksgivings which break from a heart overcharged with its grateful recollections.

These are the feelings which are to be heightened and perfected in heaven. The worship there shall be ceaseless and eternal ; and it is an interesting view of it, that it shall be all praise. No prayer shall be there, for there shall be no sense of want ; all is praise, for all is manifestation and light ; all is praise, for all is triumph ; all is praise, for all is blessedness and enjoyment. Whatever the feeling, praise, eternal praise, is the expression of it, from the breathing whisper of adoring love which flits through the prostrate ranks of the redeemed, to the full chorus of praise, the high, the universal shout of glory, and honour, and blessing, to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.

II. The second view contained in the text is, "They shall be his people ; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

This is a large and most interesting promise.

1. "They shall be his people."

There shall be a public and infallible acknowledgment of all who are his, by their admission into the tabernacle of God. This is an instructive view. Here the Church is mixed, and has never yet appeared with spotless garments, and unclouded lustre. The wheat and the tares grow together, and the servants cannot accurately separate them. Careless or wicked teachers have built upon the foundation wood, and hay, and stubble ; and these are to be seen along with

the gold, and silver, and precious stones. But "every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." And then, when the wood and hay, and stubble shall be destroyed, the gold, and silver, and precious stones shall abide, and there shall be one "glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," but "holy and without blemish." And if, with all its imperfections, communion with the Church is so profitable and delightful, what shall it be when all imperfections, both in her and ourselves, are for ever done away? Our happiness greatly depends on our society; and that shall be a society all intellect, all purity, all love.

The number too of the people of God shall there be discovered. Here we necessarily know but few. Myriads had passed away to their heaven before we were born; and though all the living saints of the Most High are known to him,—though their names are all written in his book,—yet is that book read by none but himself. And there is our want of charity, as well as limited knowledge; and this narrows the number in our view. We meet, it may be, with one hypocrite; and our faith in many who are sincere and upright is shaken, and we offend against the generation of his children. Sectarian prejudices, or differences of opinion, all contribute to chase the good from our hearts and our eyes; and none of us know what God has done for men. But in the day of God all these things shall be removed; and as Elijah was surprised by the secret number of them who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so perhaps we shall wonder at the multitudes of the saved. Lo, they come from distant ages, from distant lands, from circles we never visited, from solitudes where, little and unknown, they lived and died. They come, and all shall be acknowledged; and we shall see them, a multitude whom no man can number.

2. "He will be their God."

This, the promise to the ancient Israelites, to the Christian Church, to saints, both in earth and heaven, signifies not merely that he is the sole object of their worship, but they have a delightful propriety in him. The relation is reciprocal. They, as his people, are his portion; he, as their God, is theirs. It imports, as in the case of the ancient Jewish Church, the engagement of all his perfections on their behalf. From his wisdom, as on earth they received revelation, and thus knew his statutes and judgments, so in heaven they shall receive instruction and delight. His counsels shall be open to their reverent gaze; and in adoring blessedness they shall admire them for ever. There is his goodness. In the world, heaven pours its fatness upon the fields, and the enriched earth yields her fruits for the use of man: emblems these of the eternal communications of good in heaven. Much of goodness is experienced here; but the full tide of good will to man is reserved for the period when "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them." On earth, his Church was defended by his power. The security of Israel was a fine type of this. Balaam builds his altars, offers his sacrifices, and attempts to curse those whom God had not cursed; but he was obliged to confess that there was a power which baffled all his arts, and to say, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." And

with far greater emphasis than to the Church on earth shall it be said to the company of the saved ones in heaven, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!"

III. The third view of the happiness of the saints in light presented by the text is, their exemption from all the sufferings of this mortal state.

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Tears are the visible and affecting expressions of distress; and, therefore, to say there shall be no more tears, is to say that all those causes of sorrow which exist in the present world shall be eternally removed. The text, therefore, adds, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying;" because these are the causes which rend the hearts of men, and suffuse their eyes with tears.

There shall be no more tears of separation. The longest and most painful separations are those which are caused by death; and what eye has not been dimmed with tears by this? He must have been unhappy indeed over whose unmoistened grave no tears are shed, and whose death has occasioned no regrets. But the number of these is few. Death rends all hearts. When Joseph died, the children of Israel wept sore. "My father! my father!" exclaimed Elisha, when Elijah was taken away from him. "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" said the much-moved David, as he "went up to the chamber over the gate," that he might weep alone. And when his friend Lazarus died, "Jesus wept." Well; be it so. To weep and to be wept is the irreversible decree as to man below; but then, so much the more welcome the state we hope for. A great voice is heard out of heaven, "And there shall be no more death." The sight would be a blot in the tabernacle of God. The rigid limb, the silent pulse, the breathless lip, the pallid cheek, the fixed and darkened eye,—these, these are not scenes for heaven. But this is the decree: "There shall be no more death." This shall restore and perpetuate your friendships, and wipe the tears of separation away for ever.

And with the tears of separation pass away all those which pain wrings from the tortured body, or sorrow from the wounded spirit. Martyrs, you have been racked and torn, but there is now no more pain for you; for, like your Master, you have exchanged your crown of thorns for a crown of glory. Patient sufferers from disease, you could weep, though you could not murmur; but wearisome nights are no longer appointed you. Nor does the spirit, full charged with its inward griefs, pour the flood into the eyes. No publican here smites on his breast, exclaiming, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" No Peter, the cowardly denier of his Lord, goes out to weep bitterly. No tears of shame and grief are shed over barrenness of spirit, and hardness of heart. Zion no longer cries, "The Lord hath forgotten me." "There shall be neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain."

And we may add, that there shall not be even tears of joy. For what do they suppose? The joy which finds relief in tears supposes a previous anguish, and that the change from one state to another shakes the feebleness of mortality. Or it supposes that we are so unused to strong emotions, that our measure of joy is soon filled up; that even the bliss of earth may be too copious for the contracted vessel of our hearts, and therefore so easily overflows in tears. But

there shall be no such alternations in heaven ; nor will the capacity for blessedness be thus limited. Joy will not be so much a stranger that we shall weep at meeting it. It will be a habit, not accident. It will be, not the transient flash which dazzles, overpowers, and disappears, but the fixed and steady element in which we shall live for ever.

And the text gives the reason of all this : "The former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." How impressive and sublime is the scene thus presented ! Under the throne of Him who is arrayed in the glory of the Father, lie heaven and earth, the present seat of death, and sorrow, and pain. He speaks, and they vanish, and "the former things are passed away." He speaks again, and a new heaven and earth spring into being : "The tabernacle of God is with men ;" and he that sitteth upon the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new." What a dream will then our earthly sufferings and labours, our joys and our sorrows, appear ! They have passed away, and a new world opens to our view to abide for ever.

" With joy the sailor, long by tempest tost,
Spreads all his canvass for the distant coast :
With joy the hind, his daily labour done,
Sees the broad shadows and the setting sun :
With joy the slave, worn out with tedious woes,
Beholds the bliss that liberty bestows."

And if the sailor thus joys, though the tempest must be again braved ; and the labourer, though to-morrow's sun must awaken him to new labours, and shine again on the fetters of the slave ; what is that joy, when the howl of the last tempest sinks upon the ear, when the last labour is completed, and our chains fall off for ever ! Behold, he creates all things new ! The heavens are new, the earth new, the body new, the spirit new, society new, circumstances new ; and new for this reason, that all is perfect, and all unchangeable.

1. We have here a noble description of the Christian's heaven.

Here is no plunge into annihilation. Nor is this the heaven of the modern infidel poet,—

" I would not, if I might, be blest ;
I ask not bliss, I ask but rest."

Not a pagan Elysium ; not a Mohammedan paradise : all is noble, and pure, as well as joyful.

2. We must be made new before we can inherit this new creation.

There must be a correspondence between our own mind, and the provided blessings. If this work is as yet undone, apply yourselves to it at once. If done, rejoice in God. What, though you are yet where pain, and sorrow, and tears, and death remain, yet such hopes are as life in death, they assuage pain, they make our very tears sparkle with the light of the coming glory.

Go on, then ; and amidst pains and sorrows, and tears, and death, meditate on the words, "Behold, I make all things new ;" and upon the seal of God's eternal faithfulness set upon the whole : "And he said unto me, Write," for the comfort and support of all the sufferers and travellers of earth in all ages,—*"write ; for these things are true and faithful."*

SERMON LXXXII.—*The Rock of Believers.*

“For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges,”
Deut. xxxii, 31.

THE separation of Abraham and his descendants from the rest of mankind was an event of the deepest interest even to the world at large. Its principal object, doubtless, was to preserve among men the light of true religion; but it had, likewise, others which, though subordinate, are all of them pregnant with instruction. From that time we see the Church of God no longer scattered abroad, but exhibited in a visible community, the concentrated light of the world, the refuge of all surrounding nations.

Nor was even this all. A visible type was thus presented of the difference which God puts between his people and the world. In a future age this was to be less obvious to the senses; but before that age came, men were to be taught sensibly that God has a people on earth, with whom he specially dwells, and over whom he exercises a special care. Such were the descendants of Abraham in the promised line. Well might Moses say, “What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?” “Happy art thou, O Israel: Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?” Such comparison he often makes in order to excite their gratitude; and it is to the same peculiarity that he refers in the text. Some had departed from God; they had mixed with that world which has been in all ages contradistinguished from the Church; but they had only sinned against their own mercies. So far from being gainers by their new connections, they are told, what sooner or later they would painfully discover, “Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.”

The distinction remains to this day. God is the Rock of his Church; and all who are of the world, or who forsake him for the world, shall find, and shall finally be constrained to acknowledge, that “their rock is not as our Rock.”

The subjects of our present discourse, then, are,

- I. The felicity of God’s people; and,
- II. The vain trust of all who forsake him.

I. The felicity of God’s people. He is their Rock.

For the frequent comparison of their almighty Protector to a rock, in the Scriptures of the Jews, we must see an explanation in the natural scenery of their country. It had its fertile plains and rich valleys, surrounded and, as it were, guarded by rocks. Rocks were the parents of the streams which watered their fields. Rocks afforded the firm foundations by which their fortresses, their cities, and their glorious temple itself, were supported. Among their rocks they found the strong positions which defended them from the assaults of invading enemies. It was, therefore, impossible for them not to be impressed with these natural objects; not to have the diction of their poetry influenced by them. In this song of Moses, to whose inspired mind the future lot of Israel was unfolded, and in the Psalms, this language

abounds. The general idea is that of stable and permanent security. It is thus used in the text. Now what God was to Israel of old, he is still more to us; the thought, therefore, on which we may profitably dwell is this,—that the interests of true Christians rest upon and are supported by God, who is thus their Rock. To a few illustrations of this interesting truth I direct your attention.

1. God is the sure foundation of their trust as to their religious safety.

In matters relating to the soul, all seek some object of confidence. And in this sense is it true both “that all people will walk every one in the name of his god,” and that the declaration of the people of God is, “And we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.”

The foundation of all our friendly relations to God is found in reconciliation to him through faith in Christ; but when this has taken place, then our confidence in his mercy both may and ought to be unbounded. He is our Father, our covenant God, who changes not. Whenever we approach to him, we approach through a sacrifice which he accepts, and we may rely implicitly upon infinite merit and immutable love. Here our conscience finds repose. Our sins may rise to our remembrance. Visitations of doubt may for the moment disturb us. Perhaps we may be tempted to use the language of the psalmist, “I will say unto God my Rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?” But that very appeal shall prove that he is our Rock still, and that the first reason we had for confidence in him, the merit of his Son’s death, and his own inviolable promise, remains unshaken. Thus is God the basis of our trust. He welcomes us to his mercy, and renews to the soul, by his Holy Spirit, the comforting assurances of our acceptance in the Beloved.

2. God is the Rock on which rest all the interests of his people as to the present life.

Temporal, indeed, the interests of this life are, but still they deeply concern us; and that for three reasons. The sun of our enjoyments or sufferings is affected by them. They exercise an influence which either vitiates our character, or promotes its moral improvement. And thus, in a most important sense, they relate to eternity itself. Were all these considerations present to our minds, how much should we dread being out of the friendship of God, by whom all these interests are controlled for good or for evil! Nor is there any reflection, next to those which are immediately connected with our personal salvation, more calculated to inspire a delightful tranquillity of mind, than that God, as our Rock, sustains both our souls, and all that can affect us in this present state. “Life is yours,” says the apostle. And behold the felicity of the Christian in this. His life is no subject of chance. It is continued and terminated by a rule of unerring wisdom and kindness. His track through life is marked out by a superior counsel, by which, whether in the higher or in the lower walks, every bend and turning is determined. His measure of enjoyment or suffering is equally of Divine appointment or permission. The purposes are all gracious, the influences are all moral. And thus are all his saints in his hand. By day he is their guiding cloud, visible by its shade amidst the splendours of light: their pillar of fire by night, visible by its cheering beams in the midst of surrounding darkness.

3. God is the unfailing fountain of their supplies; for this enters into the idea of the sacred writers, when they speak of him under the comparison of a rock.

They view him, not only as the basis on which all the interests of his people securely rest, but as sending forth streams of blessing, like the rivulets which, gushing forth from the rocky hills, water, and refresh, and fertilize the valleys which lie between. "All my springs," said the psalmist, "are in thee." That there is an all-sufficiency in God, is, indeed, a point too plain to need illustration. This belongs to the very idea of God. He is all perfection, and therefore all fulness. But the question in which we are most interested is, whether he communicates of this fulness to ourselves; and the establishment of this fact exalts still higher the felicity of all to whom he is a Rock. And on this let us observe that the communications of the Divine goodness specially to good men, constitute the continual subject of the Holy Scriptures. "The Lord God," they tell us, "is a sun," the source of wisdom and vital influence; "and a shield," interposing as an almighty Protector; "he giveth grace," all spiritual favours here, "and glory," the bright rewards of eternity hereafter; and then, as though the psalmist were losing himself in the fulness of Divine beneficence, he adds, "No good thing shall he withhold from them that walk uprightly." As to this great doctrine, the New Testament might be expected to advance upon the Old; and it does so. What is the plan of redemption, so fully unfolded there, but an institution to connect man with God, and God with man; to lead us back to the sources from which we have wandered, and to remove all the obstructions which our sins had raised against the full flow of his goodness? Behold in Christ the way to the Father. See in prayer the posture of receiving, as well as of asking. In the word of God, you have his embodied wisdom to be your light. And see all crowned by the gift of the Holy Spirit; Quickener, Teacher, Comforter, Sanctifier; the light, the life, the strength of God in man.

Great is all this even now; but when we connect it with eternity, where the Source itself shall be approached, O what a prospect for believing and persevering man! If one ray of light now makes so vast a change in the whole character of man, as we see in the case of Saul of Tarsus; if one gleam of heavenly comfort can banish so deep a gloom of suffering; if one illapse of love can so cheer, purify, and exalt the soul above the world,—what shall it be when the full stream rushes forth from the infinite Fountain, and the capacity of the soul is expanded and invigorated to receive it!

4. God is our refuge from enslaving fears.

"Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort," exclaims the exulting psalmist, "for thou art my rock and my fortress;" and thus could he look with calmness on all his enemies. How sweet a picture of the repose of a soul which trusts in God does he draw in Psalm iii. 4-6; written when he fled from the face of a rebellious son at the head of a rebellious people! "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about." Such is the calm confidence of those who repose their trust in God. Nor is this fancy. It rests upon solid grounds. "When he

giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" "Hast thou not made a hedge about him?" said Satan himself, with respect to Job; and the introduction to that important book shows that into the enclosure which that hedge surrounded, not even Satan could break till permission was given; that his arts of mischief are all under control, and that the evil was allowed only for greater good to God's servant. Here, then, is the refuge for the soul from enslaving fears of the future. Dark to us it may be; but it is all light to God; and no power, no combination of powers, can match the omnipotence which defends his people. Even the fears which death summons around the dying bed, and which to the sinner rise up out of the obscurities of the eternity to which he draws near with features so terrible, are all dissipated when the soul can fly, through Christ, to the shelter of the rock of God's eternal mercy. "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Such, then, is the security of the true Israel of God. But the text teaches us,

II. The vain trusts of all who reject his mercy, and refuse to be governed by his will. "Their rock is not as our Rock." And this is so manifest that we may appeal, in proof of it, to themselves, and make them judges, even where the decision shall condemn themselves.

Idols, no doubt, are in the first place referred to; but we need not spend time in showing that the rock on which pagans, Mohammedans, or even those who have corrupted Christianity, rest, is not as our Rock. The contest among us does not lie between the true God and false deities; but between God in his true Scriptural character and relations, and various errors in reference to them; between God as the proper object of his creature's trust, and the world, on which so many rest their hopes.

What, then, are the refuges and resources of men, the supposed rocks to which they fly, and whose vanity they shall at length be doomed both to feel and to acknowledge?

1. The first is infidelity.

Perhaps there are few real infidels, at least, comparatively speaking; yet, from their arts, there may be great danger, especially to the young. What, then, is the characteristic of this system? I do not speak of vulgar infidelity, and its manifest and repulsive blasphemy; but of that which, from its connection with intellect, seems more entitled to respect. The principle which persons of this class avow, rejects all written revelation; and they therefore claim to form to themselves a system agreeable to what they call their reason. This is their rock. Three considerations will show you how unsound it is. We cannot reject the facts of Biblical history, if we would be consistent, without rejecting history altogether. If these facts be allowed, we cannot deny the argument from them to the divinity of our religion, without a monstrous violation of all the laws of this so much adored reason. These are startling considerations; but we add a third. Even were the infidel system faultless, yet it is only of man, and is therefore altogether destitute of authority, which is essential to religion; for in this there are two parties, God and man. How can there be religious service where there is no will revealed? how religious obedience where there is no law promulged? To infidels we may say, "Your

rock is not as our Rock. Yours rests upon your own reason ; and that differs in you all, and is but human at best. Ours rests upon doctrine uniform through all ages, sealed by prophecies, authenticated by miracles, consecrated by the blood of martyrs, loved by the holiest and best of men, and confirmed by experience, even to the present moment. Yourselves being judges, is your rock as our Rock ?”

2. The second is Socinianism ; under which we may class all the systems which deny the divinity and atonement of our Lord, and rest the hope of their disciples on the forgiveness of sin by the mere will and prerogative of God.

I find many considerations fatal to these systems. They contradict the plain letter of Scripture. They oblige men to reject portions of holy writ as boldly as infidels reject the whole. My Bible will tell me of a Saviour God, and of his atoning sacrifice ; and Socinianism turns away from all this. It is a religion which, as repudiating the doctrine of atonement, is new ; so new, that I am sure, even for that reason, that it cannot be true. It is thus contrary to the religion of the patriarchs. Even in paganism corrupted forms of truth are to be found. In the very corruptions of Christianity, till of late years, some reference to this was always found. Do you, then, trust in a system which annihilates the letter of one half the Bible, and the spirit of the remainder ? which assumes the principle, nowhere indicated in nature or in revelation, that God will forgive sin without shedding of blood ? a system which professes to honour goodness, and leaves truth, holiness, and justice without glory ? But our Rock is not as your rock. “ We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” We take the whole Bible. We agree with patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. And instead of arraying the attributes of God against each other, we harmonize them all, acknowledging our salvation to be through faith in the blood of the cross.

3. We find a third in Pharisaism.

The principle of this is, that moral obedience gives a merit to man which will insure his final acceptance. And is this the rock on which they trust ? Then they know not the law of God ; its length, and breadth, and height. They know not themselves ; nor that in them dwelleth no good thing ; nor that “ he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all.” They trust in themselves that they are righteous ; but let them go on to that great hour when God, who knoweth the heart, shall weigh them in the balance, and find them wanting. What then shall they do ? They have claimed justice, and they have it. Their rock is not as our Rock. We acknowledge the supremacy and holiness of the law ; we feel our guilt ; we fly to that atonement by which the law is honoured, and thus we find a strength, not our own, to enable us to fulfil it, by love to God and to man. Here, too, we make our enemies judges.

4. A fourth is presumptuous confidence in the Divine mercy.

This is mostly associated with crude, unconnected notions of religion generally ; indistinct views of the extension of mercy while sin is committed, and the spirit of the world indulged. This, alas ! to the shame of many who “ profess and call themselves Christians,” is too generally the case. Scarcely can we find pagans or Mohammedans so ignorant of their sacred books and doctrines as multitudes of professed Chris-

tians. And yet they trust in this strange view of mercy. But the fallacy is open as day. In this scheme there is no Divine law, no moral government, no day of judgment; all is groundless presumption. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." Their rock, therefore, is not as our Rock. We honour mercy as well as they; but mercy which delivers from sin as well as from punishment.

5. Finally: Instead of trusting their interests and happiness with God, many trust only to the world.

In health, and it forsakes them; in pleasure, and it disappoints them; in riches, and they "make to themselves wings and fly away;" in honour, and it is blasted; in long life, and they hear the startling voice, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." Surely their rock is not as our Rock. Health may fail; pleasures may pall; riches may fly away; honour vanish; life become extinct. And what then? God remains. Our Rock still stands. God is our health, our joy, our peace, our life, our exceeding great reward for ever.

"Trust ye," then, "in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah," and in him alone, "is everlasting strength."

SERMON LXXXIII.—*The Temptation of Christ.*

Preached in Lent.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil," Matthew iv, 1.

AT this season the Church of Christ, from a very early age, has commemorated that solemn and mysterious transaction, the temptation of our Lord, of which a detailed account is given in the chapter before us.

Mysterious we have called it, with truth; for many particulars connected with it are not explained; nor are they, in many particulars, explicable. Another state of being will unfold to us this subject, as it will every thing beside which it is profitable for us to know.

But this account of the temptation of our Lord is, nevertheless, written for our instruction; although, like many other parts of Scripture, it draws the veil where the eye of a vain curiosity would pry too far. Still, however, it leaves all that open to our contemplation from which useful lessons of admonition and comfort may be drawn: and folly, indeed, would it be in us to deprive ourselves of that information which is of so important a practical nature, because we cannot fully answer every question which the history suggests.

That it was considered, by the Divine Wisdom, of eminent importance that we should know that our Lord was thus tempted, is manifest from the fact, that it was specially revealed in order to its being recorded. No eye was upon this strange, this shuddering scene, but the eye of God, and of angels. Not even his most confidential disciples, who saw the transfiguration and the agony, were present here. To them, therefore, it could only be known by revelation; and the revela-

tion was made, that it might be recorded for the edification of the Church.

To this transaction, therefore, I would reverently direct your attention ; and,

I. Suggest a few general observations which may assist your meditations upon it.

II. Point out some of the great practical lessons which it appears to have been designed to teach.

We call your attention,

I. To a few general considerations upon this subject.

1. That we are to understand the account of the evangelist as the history of an actual occurrence.

In explaining this part of the sacred narrative some writers have resorted to allegory ; but we have no indications of this in the inspired record. It is delivered in the same narrative manner as the other parts of the sacred history ; and if this be allegorized, we have the same reason to turn the whole of Scripture into a “cunningly-devised fable.” The object of many writers, in their interpretations, is to escape some difficulties, which are often magnified beyond their due proportions ; but they forget that all attempts to prevent the Scriptures from being any thing but a stumbling block to captious, proud, and carnal men, only multiply the difficulties they would shun, and lead to fatal results. There will always be “Jews,” to whom the Scriptures will be “a stumbling block,” and “Greeks,” to whom they will be “foolishness.”

2. It may assist our thoughts on this subject, to be reminded of the true character of our Lord’s person.

That he was God, we have evidence demonstrative. That he was as truly man, of a human body and a reasonable soul subsisting, is equally clear. These natures were joined in the unity of one person, and constituted the one Christ. This doctrine is mysterious ; but this is no wonder, when the union of our own body and soul in one person is to us inexplicable. How different are the Divine and human natures ! yet in our blessed Lord they were united in one person.

But notwithstanding this, the natures of Christ are not to be confounded. They are distinct, though the person of our Lord is one. From this we may conceive how the body of Christ might hunger, and his soul be sorrowful, while as God he could not be subject to these infirmities. We can also conceive how he could grow in wisdom, as well as in stature ; while yet, as God, his knowledge was always and eternally infinite, and his presence filled heaven and earth.

Let us apply this to the case before us. The Divine nature could not be tempted ; for “God is not tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” But the attack was made upon the human soul ; upon Christ in his character of Messiah, or the “servant” of God ; an office which he deigned to assume.

3. We may observe that this history, as well as the Scriptures generally, represents one great malignant being, as the head of others, the number of whom is nowhere stated, employed in the work of tempting men, and frustrating the designs of God.

This is so clear from Scripture, that we can only consider its denial by some as one of the strongest proofs of his subtle influence over the

minds of men. For put it, that there is such a being, so subtle, active, powerful, malignant; and that men can be persuaded by a little ridicule, or pretended argument, that he exists not, how great an advantage he gains. He comes upon them unawares; and as they deny the existence of the fowler, they are not startled at the spreading of his nets. As they see not the danger, they fly not to the refuge, when the "roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour."

But why, let us ask these pretended wise men, should this be thought incredible? It is a doctrine not far out of the course of our common conceptions. That there are other beings beside ourselves, who will deny? That they may have intercourse with this world, why not as well as with any other? And that they should tempt, what is there in this? Do not men tempt each other? Sinners entice. Some men are public tempters; tempters of a nation, of an age, to bad feelings, principles, and practices. A Voltaire is a tempter by his wit; a Hume, by sophistry; a Rousseau, by eloquence; a Byron, by the splendours of poetic genius. Every bad man in an elevated situation is a public tempter.

But if we had no analogy to confirm this doctrine, the word of God has determined its truth. Wo to the unwatchful. "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour."

4. We may offer a remark upon a question often asked, "Did Satan know the person he assaulted? and could he have any hope of success?"

That he knew something of our Lord's exalted character appears from the question, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." And suppose he knew as much of Christ as to leave him no rational hope of success; this throws no discredit upon the history. The greatest minds, when wicked, often commit the greatest blunders, pushed on by passion and malignity. So Satan, trained to tempt, spited so much goodness; he longed to dim the lustre of that bright holiness which he beheld in our Saviour: but the result was, the bruising of his own head.

Yet, though he knew that Jesus was the Son of God, and therefore Divine,—for, to give Satan his due, he is a better theologian than to be a Socinian,—yet some hope of success might present itself to his mind from his not knowing the nature of that mysterious union between God and man which subsisted in him. This was new, and so deep a mystery, that our Lord says, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." The attempt of Satan was made upon the human nature. He had succeeded against the first Adam; and he might think there was no reason why he should not succeed against the second, who was as truly a man. And if the human temple were polluted, the Divinity would depart, and the work of redemption be at least postponed, and require a new incarnation. In this manner it is possible he might reason, and be encouraged to the attempt.

We proceed,

II. To point out some of the great practical lessons which this transaction appears designed to teach.

1. We are here taught the deep humiliation of our Lord.

Only three assaults are mentioned by the evangelists; but St. Mark

and St. Luke tell us that he was tempted during the whole forty days of his fasting. A veil is thrown over these deep exercises. Doubtless Satan would try all his arts, and summon up all his power for the mighty conflict. The struggle was for life, and the maintenance of his kingdom.

Let holy souls, who spurn thoughts of evil, and who mourn that those thoughts should ever enter, say what humiliation was here. They only can conceive aright of its depth.

Jesus is the Captain of our salvation; and as generals in a difficult campaign share with the common soldiers in their severest conflicts and dangers, so was he harassed and buffeted by the wicked one. Let me not faint in the day of trial; for he was "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin."

2. We learn from the history the variety of those temptations by which men are assaulted.

(1.) They are subjected to necessities. They are hungry, and in want; and they are tempted to distrust the care of Divine Providence, and to use unauthorized means of relief. This is the first class of dangerous temptations to such as are in poverty and affliction. They are urged to do wrong; to lie, to cheat, and defraud, to steal; or to murmur against the providential dispensations of their heavenly Father; or to take their cause into their own hand, and act without any reference to God. But what a triumph has the man of faith, who follows the example of his Lord! He "lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Bread is the ordinary means of support; but when this fails, there are others. Manna from heaven was given in the wilderness. Ordinary means of help and support may fail; but faint not. Thou shalt be helped and supported by means to thee unknown, if thou cease from evil, and trust in the God of faithfulness and love.

(2.) They are tempted to presumption. Satan leads our Lord to the pinnacle or balustrade of the temple. Whether he was taken on foot, or conveyed thither, we have nothing to do with that. The word used by the evangelist simply signifies to take one along with another. It was said to him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Here Satan, as some of the Greek fathers observe, quotes Scripture dishonestly, leaving out the clause, "keep thee in all thy ways;" meaning that he should be kept in all his lawful providential goings. Thus we have a second class of temptations, to sins of presumption. We fall into this evil when we go into evil company; put ourselves unnecessarily in the way of temptation; go out of the course of Providence from a restless desire of change; and when we make haste to be rich. Mark how this temptation is to be repelled: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;" thou shalt not put him to the trial, except where he has authorized it.

(3.) Temptations to the worldly spirit. Satan showed our Lord "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Perhaps Judea and its tetrarchies are meant. They are sometimes termed "the kingdoms," as Judea is sometimes denominated "the world."

Or the neighbouring countries may have been presented to him as a specimen of the world. Or some visionary representation may have been made to his mind, to assist the mountain scene. Here Satan was disclosed. Perhaps he before appeared as a hungry traveller, asking a share in our Saviour's bread; and then as an inquirer into his Divine mission; then as a tutelary angel, having a district or a world committed to his charge. But the pretended angel of light, who calls for worship, is transformed back into himself; and our Lord indignantly replies, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Satan cannot offer us similar greatness; but he tempts by ruling ambition; as in the case of Alexander, Cesar, and Napoleon. And how the poor fools were betrayed! Alexander dies of drunkenness; Cesar was stabbed in the senate house by a friend; and Napoleon died in exile at St. Helena. He tempts also by more ordinary worldly blessings. But if the price of any advantage must be a subjection to him, and a renunciation of your love and obedience to Christ, then you see the fiend; and your duty is to say, "Get thee hence, Satan." Be true to this principle, to serve only God, and to preserve your allegiance to him.

3. We here see the means of effectually resisting temptation: the word of God.

We are not to debate and reason with the enemy. Satan can beat us there. But, "It is written," is to be our reply. Every question of duty is settled by the authority of God; and from that there lies no appeal. Three times our Lord thus answers the arch enemy. The written word of God, my brethren, is your rule. Are you called upon to decide a question suggested by a temptation to sin, or to the omission of any duty? The case is already determined by the highest authority. The decision is before you, and is your only rule.

4. We learn from the narrative before us, that temptation, simply considered, is not sin.

Our blessed Lord was tempted, even to worship the devil, yet he was without sin; perfectly "holy, and harmless, and undefiled." Good men are often tempted; but unless they parley with the tempter, or their will consents to the evil, he "touches them not," so as to leave any stain. As he was tempted, and yet "knew no sin;" so may we fly to him for succour. Satan is a conquered enemy. His head is bruised; and through Jesus Christ we also may overcome. Only let us ask the aid of his Spirit; and trust in Him who knows what it is to be tempted: so shall we be "more than conquerors" through his grace and power.

SERMON LXXXIV.—*The Security and Happiness of the Church.*

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," Psalm xlvii, 4.

To this psalm Luther always had recourse when passing clouds and storms darkened the glorious morning of the Reformation. In the devotional use of this inspired composition he was not alone. It was

used by saints in still earlier times, who witnessed desolations in the earth, and combinations of enemies against the Church. To how many breaking hearts it has conveyed a cheering and triumphant confidence, the day of the Church's final victory alone will declare.

Sweet indeed is its strain. It was written for our instruction; and it conveys instruction amply, and in a manner best adapted to fix our attention, and to awaken our interest.

Two scenes are here laid before us. One is a scene of wild commotion. The earth is removed; the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea; the sea is roaring and troubled; while the mountains which still remain tremble with the beating of the chafed surges upon their base. All here is sublimely terrible.

The other scene is in perfect contrast. A placid river runs through its sheltered valley, undisturbed and undisturbable, making glad the city through which it flows, and giving fertility to its adjacent lands.

The scene of tempest and change is the world; the scene of sheltered lowliness is the Church. And how true is the picture! What nations have passed away, like tracts of earth carried into the midst of the sea! What mighty empires, like mountains, have sunk into the abyss! What an emblem of earthly change and disquiet is the ocean! restless when most at rest; and affording no security, under its most placid aspects, against the rushing storm, and the heaving surge. How much is swept away already! and there are still mountains of worldly pomp and power which at this moment "shake with the swelling thereof."

But in the midst of all this change and wild commotion, there is a valley over which the winds sweep, and are not felt; along which the river flows, and is not troubled; in which stands the city of God, encircled with "the everlasting mountains." For, "as the hills are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people." I therefore direct your attention to the security, the tranquillity, the supply, and the gladness of the Church of God.

I. The security of the Church.

The description of security to which we have just adverted is not applicable to the nominal Church. The Roman empire, though called Christian, has been subverted. The Greek Church has suffered terrible agitations from the operation of secular causes with which it has come into contact. Christian nations, like other communities, are subject to convulsions. If the world be called the Church, it must still be subject to worldly mutations. If the city be built beyond this sacred enclosure, where the river of God flows, the inundations of the restless ocean will reach it, and convulsions will shake it down. The doctrine which we intend to inculcate is, that the true Church can never fail.

Sometimes, like Israel in Egypt, it multiplies under oppression. When faithful, it is always secure; as the surrounding nations were never allowed to prevail against Israel when the law of God was duly observed. And even when the Church has been reduced by internal unfaithfulness, it has never failed; and it never will fail. Kingdoms and empires have passed away, and not a wreck of them is left, but some vestiges in ruins, standing in monumental mockery of the boasts of men; but the city of God still stands in her sheltered valley, and is made glad by the river of God.

See the antediluvian Church, in the family of Noah, outriding the flood itself.

See the patriarchal Church gathered in the tents of Abraham, till it burst forth in the glories of the wilderness, and the institutions of Zion.

See the Jewish Church preserved in Babylon, and, amidst the mighty convulsions that followed, more durable than the conquests of Alexander.

See the Christian Church outliving even the eternal Rome; and, sheltered amidst the convulsions and barbarism of the middle ages, her light burst the cloud at the glorious Reformation; a light which has ever since been prevailing against the darkness, and subduing men to its influence by the mighty dominion which it is every where assuming over their opinions and consciences.

So the text has been accomplished; and we may now walk about Zion, mark her bulwarks, consider her palaces; and from the past we may take up the triumphant strain which follows, "This God is our God for ever and ever."

We proceed to consider,

II. The tranquillity of the Church.

The scene before us is a peaceful one. Sometimes the Church is represented as a city on a hill, braving storms; sometimes as a citadel with towers and bulwarks, hurling back its assailants. Here it is described in the peaceful vale; hearing the roar and tumult, and feeling it not.

The Church, however, is not a place, but a society of faithful men; and its tranquillity is the result of that inward state of mind which is enjoyed by each. It is from the state of the heart, and from the relation of every individual to God, that this delightful repose, this hallowed quiet, so opposed to worldly agitations, results.

Behold how many sources of tranquillity are opened in the true Church of God.

1. You find there men at peace with God.

They are reconciled to him through the blood of his Son; and hence the tumult of inward guilt has subsided, and all is peace.

2. You see there men under restraint.

They are placed under the holy government of their Lord; and each of them is possessed of a new nature, the fruit of his regenerating grace. By this government, and this new nature, their passions, tempers, tongues, and actions, are all laid under restraint; and every one is charged to do to others as he would that others should do to him.

3. You find in the Church men in communion with God.

How tranquillizing is the voice which says to them, "Be still, and know that I am God!"

Be still, anxiety and fear! "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Be still, apprehension! The world around may be disquiet; but I am God, and I rule the whole.

Be still, impatience! I am God; and the times and seasons are in my power.

4. You see men there in the use of religious ordinances.

To some persons, perhaps, this may convey no idea of rest of spirit. And certainly it will not to those who say concerning the worship of God, as they do concerning his Sabbaths, "What a weariness is it!" But the true citizens, of whom we speak, worship God without distraction. They enjoy the calm of the Sabbath. The rest of trust, in their minds, is fed and strengthened by the word of truth. Language cannot express their enjoyments, under the sweet and calming melody of praise; and the efforts of a love which carries the spirit from a restless world to an unchanging God.

We invite your attention,

III. To the supply of the Church.

This is represented under the apt and striking emblem of a river. Standing on the brink of a river, we can scarcely reflect without emotion, that the stream which glides so noiselessly by us is fed from some mysterious source, has flowed from the earliest ages, and will flow on while the sun and moon endure. How fit an emblem is this of the supplies with which God blesses his Church! See it in the rich supply of truth and grace.

Here flows the stream of heavenly truth, bright and pure. It has widened as it has flowed; and it now sweeps with all the fulness of the last and perfect revelation from God. Grace to apply that revelation to practical purposes is equally free. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."

See here the rich supply of grace and blessing. It is no where else to be found; but here is the copious flood. Here the penitent guilty are freely forgiven; here the corrupt and degenerate heart is made new; here the fulness and variety of promises are only to be pleaded in prayer, and the blessings with which they are charged are imparted. The great and interesting summary of these blessings is, life, love, and holiness; and all are given. Life, supernatural vigour; love, which connects our affections with God and heaven; and holiness, leading to present fellowship with God, and fitting us for a blissful immortality.

These blessings flow here only; but here they flow abundantly, and will flow for ever.

The text also speaks,

IV. Of the gladness of the Church. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God."

The gladness which the Church of God enjoys has peculiar characters.

1. It is noble, and worthy of rational beings.

It is not a gladness arising from the indulgence of appetite and passion, which in the reflection "stings like a serpent, and wounds like an adder;" but a gladness in which the understanding and conscience participate.

2. It is satisfying.

"He that drinketh of this water," said our Lord to the Samaritan woman, by the side of Jacob's well, "shall thirst again;" and the remark applies to all earthly enjoyments; "but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." It "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

3. It is sanctifying.

All spiritual enjoyments lead the mind back again to the source whence they emanate, and thus heighten our conformity to Him who is essential truth and goodness.

4. It is benevolent.

The hallowed gladness enjoyed by the spiritual Church of God inspires "the pure benevolent desire," that all the world may partake of the same benefit. Hence the efforts of private individuals, and the more vigorous and extensive efforts of societies, for the universal diffusion of evangelical light and happiness. The more our own hearts are gladdened with the blessings of salvation, the more will they expand in the exercises and triumphs of Christian charity.

5. It fits us for scenes where gladness is eternal.

"The sorrow and sighing," which are incident to the present state, will ere long "fly away;" for in the presence of our God there is "fulness of joy," without any admixture, and "at his right hand are pleasures for evermore."

SERMON LXXXV.—*The Oracles of God.*

"What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God," Romans iii, 1, 2.

To the first chapter of this epistle no Jew of St. Paul's time would object. It describes the idolatrous and immoral state of the Gentiles, and declares them to be under the wrath of God.

The apostle seems to anticipate the approbation of the Jew, in regard to this part of his argument. But there is a great difference between the sympathizing censures of the Christian, and the harsh and censorious judging of the Pharisee and the bigot. To the Jew therefore he turns, in order to fix a salutary and also awakening conviction in his mind. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." He thus finally proves that Jew and Gentile, "the whole world," were guilty before God.

After the apostle had thus put both parties on the same level, a Jewish objector might say, "What advantage then hath the Jew? and what profit of circumcision, the sign of our special relation to God?" and the apostle gives the answer.

Our religious privileges are not to be thought of trifling importance, because they do not produce their full effect. They cannot be a substitute for personal holiness; they cannot excuse vice; but man's ingratitude does not cancel his obligations; nor does the abuse of privileges destroy their value. The unbelief of men does not make the truth of God of no effect. Much, O ye Jews, as ye have abused the Divine goodness, it has flowed to you in a special manner; and if you now ask what advantage you have had, I reply, "Much every way." I might prove this by referring to your whole history; but I sum up all in one: chiefly, because unto you were committed the oracles of God.

I bring this subject before you, my Christian brethren, for the purpose of reminding you that this great privilege is yours ; that you have been grafted into the same stock, and have succeeded to the same place, as the visible Church of God on earth. As to advantage, moral and religious, you have it "much every way ;" and chiefly, because unto you have been committed the oracles of God.

Let me, then, to impress you with this advantage, endeavour to open to you some of the leading characters of the oracles of God ; and to remind you that you are entrusted with them.

We call your attention,

I. To the leading characters of the oracles of God.

1. The first character is that of absolute truth and wisdom.

The word rendered "oracles" signifies a "Divine speech or answer;" and to distinguish these from all pretended oracles of heathen deities, the apostle calls them "the oracles of God," of the true and living God. It is true that they were delivered at different times, and were spoken to us by men ; but they were "holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We speak, says the apostle, "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth ;" and therefore the oracles which they uttered were "the oracles of God."

Words professing to be from God ought to have strong evidence. This we grant. But no man who rejects them either thinks that we call him to believe on weak evidence, or that he ought so to believe. But it is not with weak evidence of their truth that we present the unbeliever. On the contrary, how mighty and commanding is the evidence in favour of the oracles of God ! Every one of them was attested by miracle ; and every one of them is ratified by the fulfilment of prophecy. Their continuance in the world, when they have for ages reproved that world, is a miracle ; and their unabated efficacy in giving life and salvation, to this hour, is the demonstration that they are oracles of God.

If, then, they are from God, the question of their wisdom and truth is settled. We cannot admit that there is a Being of infinite perfection, without admitting his perfect wisdom and holiness. He cannot be deceived himself ; and he cannot deceive his creatures. On this rock we rest. The perfect truth of the Scriptures is as demonstrable as that God is wise and holy. And here is the advantage of possessing these oracles. Our great interest lies in moral and religious truth ; and that truth is here. There is not a question relating either to duty or salvation, to which there is not here an answer. Are you an inquirer ? There is the oracle. Consult it ; for "it shall speak, and shall not lie."

2. The subjects of these Divine speeches or oracles are of infinite importance.

They might have addressed us on other and subordinate subjects ; but in this the wisdom as well as the goodness of God is displayed, that on those questions which are vital to our peace and safety, the oracle speaks ; and on those which are curious, rather than useful, it is silent.

Some persons have complained of this. And, indeed, if all curious questions were here answered, no book would be so much consulted as the Bible. Yet knowledge is not prohibited, but only delayed. Our present state is rather a state of practice and attainment ; than of con-

temptation ; and the revelation is adapted to it. Yet, "what thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter."

Tell me, however, on what subject we lack information, which it behoves us to know, that is not here explained ? Is it on the character of God, with whom we have to do ? Lo, he has proclaimed it himself. Is it on the laws by which we are governed ? He wrote them on tables of stone, and expounded them by the lips of his incarnate Son. Is it on the true state of man ? The sacred oracles show us that state as in a glass. Is it on the point of rescue and redemption ? The oracles of God speak of nothing but with reference to this great subject. Is it on the practical application and attainment of this mercy ? Here, where it is so important that all should be clear, the oracles of God are not like the oracles of heathenism, dark and ambiguous. All is lucid and certain. We are directed to a life of faith, of prayer, and to a constant walk with God, in order to the attainment of eternal salvation. For these discoveries we thank thee, O thou condescending Teacher. We are content to leave mysteries to thy time of exposition. We shall hear thee say many things to us, which now we could not bear. It is sufficient for us at present to know how we may be delivered from sin, and from its penalty, eternal death ; and how we may daily walk so as to please thee.

3. We have a most interesting character given us of these oracles of God, when they are called "lively" or "living" oracles.

This expression may be paralleled by our Lord's, where he says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." It is this which constitutes the grand peculiarity of the word of God. It is a word with which the Spirit of God wonderfully works ; and which he renders living. No other book has this peculiarity. Show me one which all the wicked fear ; which lays a secret dread upon the boldest ; which cuts deep into the conscience, and rouses salutary fears ; which comforts and supports ; and while its blessed truths quiver on the lips of the dying, disarms death of its sting. Show me such a book, and you show me the Bible. In all the crowded libraries of the world you can find no other that possesses such power.

Show me a man, like yourselves, who, when he discourses, awakens souls from deadly sleep ; so that the careless shall fall before God, convinced of all, judged of all ; who to a trembling spirit, says, "Believe and live," and he actually believes and lives ; whose counsel effectually guides, quickens, and comforts, in his constant ministrations ; show me such a teacher, and you show me a minister of Christ, and one who speaks only as the oracles of God. Among all the men who have been celebrated for oratory, and for their power over senates, armies, and the populace, who ever professed to produce effects like these ? Now explain these phenomena. Tell me from what in these printed pages this man derives this wondrous power. Nothing explains this but the life which the Spirit imparts. "Blessed," then, "are the people who know the joyful sound." With the oracles of God the Author is present, whether you read or hear ; and you have "thoughts that" truly "breathe, and words that burn." You cannot avoid this power. It will make the word either "a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death."

4. Another character of the oracles of God is, that they not only speak, but make all his other oracles vocal.

God has three other oracles,—nature, general providence, and particular or personal providence. Take the first of these. Nature has its solemn voice. “There is not a speech nor language where their voice is not heard,” says the psalmist, when speaking of the heavenly bodies. But this is connected with the spread of the Gospel in the very psalm where these words occur. And such is the fact. The voice of nature is not heard where the Gospel is not. In heathen countries the very heavens are turned into idols, and God is excluded from the thoughts of men. But whenever the living oracles come, then every star, and mountain, and river, proclaims its glorious Maker; “day unto day uttereth speech;” and the voice of the oracle falls distinct and convincing upon every ear.

There is the general providence of God exercised in the government of nations. All its arrangements have an object, and are carried on upon a plan. They are all intended to display the wisdom, power, goodness, justice, and truth of God; and terminate in the conversion of all nations to the faith of Christ. Yet all this is unknown to those who are destitute of the Divine oracles. To them it appears that one event happens to all. One nation rises, and another falls; and every occurrence is either attributed to chance, to blind fate, or to the caprice of deities without wisdom, and without mercy. The living oracle gives a voice to all this. Instructed by it, we see the past, and we anticipate the future. We mark the design of God, “who worketh all in all.” We see all things tending to one end; and rest in the assurance that “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain shall be made low; the rough places shall be made plain; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed; and all flesh shall see it together.”

There is also a particular or individual providence, which confers upon us all our blessings, appoints us our station in life, and assigns to us our sorrows. Many lessons this providence is intended to teach us. “The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance;” and the rod that smites us has a voice which we are directed to hear. But till the living oracle speaks, all is silence; and we derive no lessons of true wisdom from the events of life. Behold, then, another advantage resulting from the oracles of God. When we acquaint ourselves with God in his word, then every thing ministers to our “instruction in righteousness.”

5. The oracles of God present a peculiar character in their form; and in this we perceive an instance of the condescension of almighty God, who evidently intended thus to attract and fix our attention on what is to us vitally interesting.

Mark, my brethren, the different modes in which the truth is presented to us, and all bearing upon one great end, the making of us “wise unto salvation.”

Here we have history the most ancient; yet bound up with an account of our fall, the promise of redemption, the sufferings and triumphs of the Church, and the manifestations of God.

Here we have proverbs or maxims of wisdom, that truth might be laid up in the memory; and here we have poetry, powerful, sublime, and gracefully arrayed, to make our tastes and imagination the instruments of awakening attention.

Here we have examples; to show us piety in action. Patriarchs,

prophets, kings, and priests, all pass before us, and invite us to tread in their footsteps. Here we see the incarnate Word himself, the sinless man; and his apostles, so following him as to call upon us to follow them in all the ways of holy obedience.

Here we have doctrine in its simplest form, so that he who runs may read; and the deep things of God proposed to us in the language of men.

Here we have prophecy, to give us an interest in the future; and the designs of Providence, extending even to the end of time, are presented to our view, to excite a hallowed curiosity, to animate our hopes, and to call forth our exertions in the cause of true religion.

Finally, here we have parable, allegory, and metaphor, in which we observe a peculiar display of wisdom and condescension. Illustrations are taken from natural objects, and the familiar pursuits of men; and so divinely contrived, that, while the subject is illustrated by the objects to which it is compared, the objects so constantly or so frequently occurring to us may call our attention to the heavenly subject. Thus, in all who are familiar with the Scriptures, truth is associated with every thing around them; and all familiar objects are made to speak to them of God and Christ, of their danger and remedy, of their fall and recovery. Light and darkness; the gently breathing wind, and the storms; sun, moon, and stars; mountains and valleys; springs and rivers; the operations of husbandry, and the useful arts; the domestic and the social relations of life; have all been, so to speak, sanctified by the truth, and are all made oracles of heavenly wisdom.

6. The last character I shall notice is the fulness of the truth conveyed in the oracles of God.

Great as are the revelations which God has made, nothing is exhausted. As in Christ the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, to be eternally manifested; so in his word there is a fulness of truth. And hence the Bible is ever new. In regard to morals, we have principles, as well as acts, applicable in many respects for ever; and the depth of their wisdom will be more and more manifested as time rolls on, and mankind are placed in new and varying circumstances. Who can exhaust the doctrines of holy Scripture? Doctrines especially relating to God, and Christ, and the depth of all-redeeming love. We have a beautiful instance of this fulness in the types of Holy Scripture, rising in interest, and increasing in number, till they received their fulfilment in Christ. And even things in heaven itself are represented by allusions to the tabernacle. Prophecy, also, receives "a germinant accomplishment;" and the world is now awake with attention to the scenes which it describes. The effects of the whole scheme will be developing for ever. In a very important sense the Bible will be the oracles of God to the Church above. Every part of that holy book will be written upon the memory of each glorified human spirit, and be always receiving illustration to the glory of its great Author.

In conclusion, I remind you,

II. That these oracles are "committed" or entrusted to you.

1. They are entrusted to be read and understood.

There is great guilt in treating them with indifference and neglect. "Search the Scriptures;" for they were given to this end.

2. To interpret honestly.

They are "the oracles of God;" and it is a sin of no ordinary magnitude to pervert their meaning. Take heed how you read and hear. The Bible contains that "truth which is according to godliness." This is an important rule of interpretation. To pervert these holy oracles, so as to give encouragement to impiety, is to incur a responsibility at which the stoutest heart may justly tremble.

3. To make them known to others.

It is a great sin to restrain the Scriptures; and in this respect the Church of Rome is the most guilty community on earth. Take care that you do not imitate that people. Teach these oracles to your children and servants, and assist in circulating them to the ends of the earth.

4. To apply to practical purposes.

Salvation is revealed to us in those oracles; and that salvation we must work out with fear and trembling, or be lost for ever. If we have the word of salvation in our hands, and are at last found in our sins, our account will be terrible; and our punishment, remorse, and confusion, will admit of no remedy.

SERMON LXXXVI.—*The Infliction of Evil upon Mankind.*

"For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High," Lamentations iii, 33-35.

THERE is much of the evil of affliction in the world; and reflecting men, not having the light of revelation, have always felt themselves perplexed by the fact. To solve the difficulty, some, among the orientals, conceived of the existence of two opposite and conflicting principles, that of good, and that of evil. Others referred all to fate; while some, again, removed the Supreme Mind from all concern in worldly affairs.

And, indeed, separate from this blessed book, the scene is gloomy enough. Sorrow, pain, change, and death, affecting ourselves, affecting others, every where prevail. An expansion of darkness covers the earth. This fact we cannot alter. All our reasoning upon it leaves it still the same. But in the manner in which we view it, our happiness, our improvement, are deeply concerned. That God could terminate such a state of things, is certain. That he does not, is equally certain. And yet, let every sufferer know,—and let this truth hang like a cheering light upon every dark cloud that may envelope us,—that "he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."

In the improvement of this subject, let me show you,

I. The proofs of this interesting doctrine.

II. The great reason on which this permission or infliction of evil is founded.

III. The gracious limitations by which it is regulated.

I. 1. The first proof that he cannot afflict willingly, or, as it is in the Hebrew, "from his heart," is found in his nature.

That nature is love. Now, though God is just, yet is he benevolent.

As he is not merciful in that sense which would impair his justice, so is he not just in such a way as to impair his love. "But how," you say, "is this proved? All that we see is mixed, and can only show that he is both good and severe." True; and therefore, that we know him more perfectly, and see him under milder characters, we owe to revelation. The declaration, that "God is love," is in his word. And there we see the grand, the indubitable proof of it. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." If God be love, he cannot "afflict from his heart." Settle this in your minds as a principle. Love can take no delight in our afflictions, and must ever be ready to mitigate or remove them.

2. A second proof is, that we can trace all misery up to causes independent of the will and appointment of God.

And here we need not urge how many miseries we bring on ourselves, how many are brought on us by others, in opposition to his evident design; nor how the sins of men oblige the reluctant justice of God to inflict punishment. We may go up to the fountain head. When God made creatures, he made them perfect and happy, with power to remain so. Charge it not on him that any are miserable. In that blessed world of obedient spirits, no pain, no sorrow enters; no sigh escapes from any of its habitants; no death stains it. They kept their first estate, and their first blessedness remains. If earth presents another scene, an enemy hath done this. Man sinned, and thus awakened a vengeance which, but for his own act, had for ever slept.

3. The third proof is, that in all cases we find more of mercy than judgment.

You have sickness, but how much more health! pain, but how much more ease! disappointment, but how many gratifications! You sigh for a good which you have not; but how many do you actually enjoy! And yet, you deserve nothing but utter punishment. Nay, take the most distressing, the most suffering, cases, where all human help is vain; even to the poorest, the most depressed, there is opened a fulness of spiritual comfort and blessedness, with eternal exemption from all misery whatever. O why, then, should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let him feel, let him groan, but let him not complain. "He doth not afflict willingly."

4. The fourth proof is drawn from the success of prayer in removing afflictions.

That all evil should not be removed by prayer, we shall have to show you just now. That God does remove and mitigate so much, moved by the voice of man's distress, is the proof that he is full of compassion, and "doth not afflict willingly." Sickness has sometimes oppressed you. You have appealed to the mercy of God, and he has healed you. Death has made you afraid, as it did Hezekiah; and like him you have prayed, and God has added to the years of your life. Under some threatening cloud, ready to burst on you, you have called on the name of the Lord, and it has been dispersed, or it has broken in unanticipated blessings. In great trouble you have prayed to him, and your song now is, "He sent from above, he took me out of the great waters." You have been in painful perplexity, and he has guided

you by his counsel. A God who does so often deliver from trouble, when man, unworthy man, prays, cannot "afflict from his heart, nor grieve the children of men."

II. Much affliction will be found to remain after all; and we still want the reason of it.

To enter into this question, let us remember, that in the Divine government there may be said to be three kinds of punishment. The punishment of destruction. All deserve this; and we can only escape it through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; and none actually suffer it, but through their own fault. The punishment of restraint. When the heart is bent to evil, it is a mercy, both to the individual and to society, that a punitive restraint is imposed. We have two remarkable instances of this in man's doom to labour and toil, and in the shortening of human life. The punishment of correction. And recourse is often had to this, to prevent the punishment of destruction. For though salvation is purchased for us, still is it dependent on our choice; and man neglects, delays, and refuses. Corrective punishments, therefore, are proofs of God's love, not of vengeance. They are a painful, but necessary, part of our discipline, to prevent the greater evil of our destruction. They are intended,

1. To keep man in mind that God notices his sins, although he may delay their final punishment. Sin is no trifling evil.

2. To give a spiritual direction to our affections, by showing to us the vanity of the world.

3. To call good principles into exercise, and thus to prepare us for heaven.

Faith, patience, sympathy for others, are all strengthened in affliction. We learn there many lessons which otherwise we should not have known. Blessed is the man whom God correcteth and teacheth out of his law.

This merciful intention of affliction is farther illustrated in the text by,

III. The limitations by which it is graciously regulated.

1. He does not so afflict and grieve, as to crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth.

This is our true and affecting character. We are here, as in a dark and wretched dungeon. We have lost spiritual liberty and light, are fast tied and bound with the chain of our sins, and under sentence of death. Conscience torments, Satan triumphs, and even God surrounds us with many miseries, inward and outward, as our punishment. But our misery is not final, our case not hopeless. He does not "crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth:" a figure this, taken from the customs of the vintage, and used to express utter destruction. O no. Our Lord has purchased liberty for the prisoners of the earth, and the Gospel is the proclamation of it. We are called forth into light and liberty, into joy and hope. Your afflictions are only intended to make you sensible of the depth of your wretchedness, that you may hear and obey the voice of your great Deliverer. And if that voice be obeyed, even though for a time you be as prisoners in the grave, yet you shall come forth, and exchange the sufferings of earth for the felicities of heaven.

2. He doth not so afflict as "to turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High."

On this beautiful allusion we may briefly dwell. The face of the Most High ; the Shechinah, or visible glory of the Lord ; symbolizing the throne of grace in heaven ; God accepting the oblation and offering of his Son for our sake, and appointing him our Mediator, and giving us the covenant right of approaching to him, with all our guilt and misery, that we may obtain the provided deliverance. And never does God turn away the exercise of this gracious right. Art thou afflicted ? Use thy privilege. Is thy pain that of sorrow for sin ? Confess, renounce it, and seek the joy of salvation. Then shalt thou have access as a child. In darkness, ask his light ; in sorrow, inward joy ; in temptation, strength and victory ; in all pressing circumstances, help in thy time of need ; in sickness, patience ; in death, life ; in all, submission.

God gave thee this right. He never turns it away, but will honour it by the fulness of his blessings.

SERMON LXXXVII.—*The Parable of the Prodigal Son.*

“And he said, A certain man had two sons : and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land ; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country ; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : And no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son : Make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat, and be merry : For this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field : And as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come ; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in : Therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment : And yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends : But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad : For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found,” Luke xv, 11-32.

THE design of this parable was to reprove the Pharisees for the offence which they took when our Lord received publicans and sinners. The publicans were hated from their connection with the Roman

power, whose taxes they collected. Even when they were Jews, they were regarded, in some respects, as Gentiles; and the general hatred which the Jews cherished toward the Gentiles was transferred to these obnoxious persons. It was, however, our Lord's design, as is apparent from the parable itself, not merely to accommodate the feelings of the Jews to a few publicans; but to anticipate the results which were likely to arise from the future spread of Christianity in the world, and attempt to prevent, by the sentiments contained in the parable, the indulgence of this feeling toward the Gentile world. It was by that they filled up their wickedness; and he who came unto his own endeavoured, in his mercy to Israel, to prevent this by displaying the compassion of God to the least deserving of his sinful creatures; and as it were, to shame man out of his prejudices and enmities, by representing God as the common Father of both Jews and Gentiles, freely pardoning the most disobedient and thankless of his children, whenever they bow at his feet, and in penitential sorrow say, "I have sinned."

These were sentiments that might have melted the obduracy of Pharisaic pride; but they failed; and in failing they rendered the people inexcusable: and they who envied the mercy of God to others turned that mercy into justice in respect to themselves.

To all ages the parable before us will remain as one of the most encouraging of the records of the compassion of God to sinners. It has given hope and faith to myriads of individuals of every country. They, too, have said, "I will arise and go to my Father;" and they have been received with equal grace. Dead, they are alive; lost, they are now found. It will have the like effect upon others; for if there be a portion of God's word adapted to meet every apprehension which may agitate the breast of a penitent in his approaches to an offended God, it is this.

The primary design of this parable is, however, intimately connected with the occasion on which we are met,—the anniversary of your missionary society. The younger son is the Gentile world; the elder son, the seed of Abraham. The disobedient conduct of the younger son, and its unhappy consequences, describe the religious rebellion of the Gentiles against God, and their consequent degradation and misery.—The return of the prodigal is the call of the Gentiles; and the proud and unbending elder brother is the Jewish nation, earnestly expostulated with, and kindly entreated, by the Father of both; but still rebellious, and, in return, forsaking the Father's house, and falling under his displeasure.

In the interpretation of parables there is a rule, the neglect of which has often produced ridiculous comments and discourses; and in other cases, such as are most mischievous. That rule is, that every part of a parable is not significant; and that, therefore, to every part a mystical interpretation is not to be given. They are allegorical representations of spiritual and moral truths, put in the form of brief narrative. To render them complete, it is requisite that they should contain such a selection of circumstances as will convey the truth or truths intended; and which will at the same time form an attractive and striking relation. Beside the circumstances designed to illustrate truth, there are often others which are introduced to fill up the story, and give it grace

and spirit. The latter are to be separated; and to the former alone we are to confine our interpretations. Nor is this all. Even the significant circumstances can only bear a general, and not a minute and distorted resemblance to the doctrines taught; because no spiritual things can, in all points, be represented by things natural. These are, therefore, to be interpreted generally; and he who gives a loose to a vain imagination, in giving minute and particular means to every branch of a parable, only dishonours the truth of God.

With these remarks, and with these cautions, we proceed to the application of this parable to the important object which has brought us together,—to consider the state of the Gentile world, and to stretch out our hands to their relief.

We observe,

I. That in this parable almighty God is represented as the common Father of all mankind, of Jew and Gentile.

This is a principal article of religion; and though it appears a very obvious one, it had been so greatly obscured or lost, that it needed a solemn republication. Had the Jews in our Lord's time retained the impression of this truth, they could never have indulged those feelings toward the Gentiles which he had occasion to reprove, and which rendered them so unlike their pious ancestors, the holy patriarchs.—Among the Gentiles themselves, the different races of men were considered as essentially superior and inferior to one another.

The doctrine of the Gospel is, that all men stand in the same relation to God, as children of the same parent; and that none of them are placed in circumstances of inferiority, as to their religious and moral condition, but in consequence of some judicial process, occasioned by rebellion and disobedience. This doctrine of the ancient Church of God was solemnly republished by Jesus Christ. He teaches us when we pray to say, "Our Father which art in heaven;" and in our text he states that "a certain man had two sons." The apostle also adds, in the name of his great Master, God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." On this basis rests God's universal love. From this springs the universal benevolence of man. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" The most distant and wretched prodigal may say to God, "My Father." The most distant and wretched prodigal is our brother.

II. We are taught in the parable, that whatever inequalities there may be now in the religious advantages of mankind, they were once equal sharers in the benefits of the house of the common Father.

Distant as the younger son is seen from his father's house, he, too, was once in it; and, while he remained there, no distinction was made between him and his elder brother.

This is not a matter of reasoning, but of history. From the flood to the call of Abraham centuries elapsed. Learned men are not agreed respecting the exact number. The lowest computation is about five hundred years; the highest, about twelve hundred. During this period the elder and younger son both abode in the house. The patriarchs stood in the same relation to the future Jewish Church, and to the future Gentile races of men. Their privileges were then equal; for both were under the instructions of the common Father. The common religion was shared by all the sons of Noah; the promises were given

to them all ; the worship of God was established and practised among them ; sacrifices were offered, and pardons were obtained. O delightful scenes of the early ages of the world, before idolatry and superstition had deformed God's worship, and had shed their baneful influence unchecked upon society ! To these scenes there were even very early exceptions. Yet the fathers of the human race were the priests of their extensive households ; and wherever they led their flocks, or built their cities, they erected the altars of their God. We may collect from what remained in later and worse ages, what was the state of things in those better times. Men walked with God ; prophets predicted the appearance of the Messiah ; angels descended in vision ; and the elders poured forth the fulness of moral truth in tides of copious and glowing eloquence. The sons were in the house of their Father ; under the Father's instruction ; under his eye, and under his smile.

III. We remark, that the distinction, as far as it was a religious one, between the Jew and the Gentile, was one created by the Gentiles themselves, and was not the act of God.

This we are taught in the parable. The dereliction of the younger son was his own act. He was not thrust out of his father's house, but left it of his own accord. He said, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth unto me ;" and having obtained this, he "went into a far country."

The father's house is the Church of God. It existed from the beginning ; for he ever had a faithful people, to whom the doctrines of truth were delivered, and among whom religious ordinances were established. It had, too, its restraints and discipline. Immorality of every kind was discountenanced and repressed ; worship, except in the prescribed form, was forbidden ; and the obedience of faith to revealed truth was inculcated and required. We have early indications of the disposition to revolt against parental authority ; to become insensible to parental goodness ; of uneasiness under the discipline and truth of the Church. Babel became one nursery of false religion, and Egypt another. Strange deities were worshipped by some of the progenitors of Abraham ; and thus the Gentiles began to go out of the Church of God, forming systems of religion of their own, profanely and wickedly despising the authority of God, and of the patriarchs who had walked with him. But Abraham was a faithful man ; and with him the covenant was established. His seed, though with many instances of rebellion, remained in the Church of God,—the house of their Father,—and received, in successive ages, those new revelations of truth which would have been vouchsafed to all, had they not forsaken the Lord. They thus enjoyed a light shining more and more unto the perfect day ; while the rest of mankind were sinking, with every age, into grosser darkness, and deeper wretchedness. From that time "the elder brother" was seen in the house of his Father ; and the "younger son" a voluntary outcast from his home.

IV. The parable affords us the true key to all the idolatry and false religion in the world. It is the pure offspring of a vicious heart.

The circumstance which rendered the younger son uneasy under the discipline of his father's house was the restraint there put upon the evil propensities of his heart. He therefore frees himself from all restraint ; goes into a far country ; and spends his substance in riotous

living. This is, and has ever been the cause of the corruption of the true religion.

It is not an easy task to trace the wanderings of error from the first departure of the mind from the truth of God; but it is easy to discover the constant connection between increasing error and increasing vice. The more developed and systematic false religions have become, the more eminently have they ministered to the corruption of the heart; and this leaves no doubt that they were thus ramified, and thus diversified and perfected, for the very end of so ministering to all that is corrupt in man. They have not arisen out of necessity. Men have not become vain in their imaginations, because they had not the means of knowing better, as some pretend; but because they did not wish to be better informed. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge. This is their case, as laid down by the apostle. They had first the patriarchal religion, which none of them had ever wholly lost. Nations the most distinguished for their idolatry have always been in circumstances to obtain benefit from the direct revelations of God, had they been disposed to avail themselves of them. All of them have seen the heavens declaring the glory of God, reproving their false deities; and God has no where left himself without witness. They have shunned the light in all ages, because their deeds were evil; and however varied have been the forms of their idolatry, they all bear the proofs of a common origin, the depravity of the heart. The hand of the same architect is impressed upon all their forms; and that architect is vice. From Moloch to Juggernaut, from Baal to Vishnoo, from Jupiter to Brahma, every deity, every festival, all their orgies, all their principles, have been directed to one sole end, to bring man under the entire control of polluted passions and appetites, and to extinguish every virtue that even the fall of man has left amidst the moral ruins of the human heart. He left his Father's house, to spend his substance "among harlots," and "in riotous living."

V We are directed, in the parable, to the tenderness of the father in not suffering him to go away without suitable provision.

He saw and lamented the rebellious and untoward disposition of his son; yet he nevertheless "divided to him his portion." By this we are reminded of that affecting instance of the goodness of God to the Gentile world, in that, notwithstanding their early tendency to idolatry, notwithstanding that they voluntarily left his Church, he still bestowed upon them a portion of his truth, sufficient for their spiritual sustenance and salvation.

The "living" was divided; and, for any thing that appears, equally so. When Abraham was first called, and for some time afterward, there was no great difference between the religious knowledge of his family, and that of others. Both had the first promise, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Both had the typical rite of sacrifice. Both had the knowledge of the one true God, of morals, and of immortality. Here, however, was the great difference: in the elder branch of the family the knowledge was increased: by the younger it was wantonly squandered away. And yet it was not squandered away all at once. There was a gradation in the fall and wretchedness of the young man mentioned in the parable; and we see this exemplified in the history of the Gentiles. After the separation of the brothers

we see, in the younger branch, Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, who was, as his name indicates, "King of righteousness, and king of peace." And in the time of Abraham and Isaac we discover traces of the knowledge and fear of God, both in Egypt and Canaan. Job and his friends were also of the younger family; yet they had very sublime views of God, and correct views of moral duty, though under some mistakes respecting providence; and Job himself knew that his Redeemer lived, and would stand at the latter day upon the earth. He also expressed his conviction that, although his body might be destroyed by worms, he should nevertheless in his flesh see God; which unquestionably expresses his belief in the resurrection of the human body. Yet did the waste of the original portion proceed with awful pace. Egypt, in the time of Moses, was filled with idols; and its sovereign both profanely and ignorantly asked, "Who is Jehovah?" Even as early as the time of Job Arabia had its idolaters, who, seeing "the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness," suffered their "hearts to be secretly enticed," and their "mouths to kiss their hands," in homage to those luminaries. In Canaan the iniquity of the Amorites was at length filled up; and Israel was led over Jordan to avenge the quarrel of God. But we may still trace the waste down to the absolute want and wretchedness of the present day. Now and then we see a moral sentiment, a conception of the true God, beaming forth from the thickening darkness of nations; as we may conceive the very rags of the prodigal to retain something of their original colour and texture, sufficient to indicate the rank from which he had fallen; but insufficient to protect him from the cold, and too worthless to be exchanged for food to satisfy his hunger. Now, however, the patrimony is wholly spent; the last farthing of it is gone; and the rags themselves have almost lost even the hue of original opulence. The knowledge of God, one of the first principles which enter the mind, and the last that forsakes it; even that is nearly extinct. The followers of Budhoo know and disown it. The more numerous followers of Brachma know and disregard it. To the tribes of Africa it is nearly or wholly lost; and although those of pagan America hold it, it is unconnected with any other principle that can give it influence. How true are the words of the parable, "And he wasted his substance!"

Nor is it to be overlooked, that it was the very substance given him by his father, that he made the instrument of his vices. This has been strikingly shown in the religion of the Gentiles. No man seeks error, as error, in religion. Error itself has no evidence, and therefore borrows that of truth. In all false systems of religion, we see the original revelations converted into the means of darkening the understanding, and polluting the heart. The original revelation of three persons in the Godhead, the Elohim, has been made to sanction the notion of gods many, and lords many. The doctrine of holy and of evil angels has been perverted into that of benevolent and malignant demons. The doctrine, that no man can be eminent and useful except by the inspiration of God, has been employed to raise eminent men into objects of worship as gods. The facts of sacred story have all been converted into monstrous and ridiculous fable. The doctrine of the resurrection was perhaps made to originate that of the transmigration of souls. And in the comparatively modern systems of India, we trace the in-

carnation of our Lord, and the facts of Christian, as well as of patriarchal history.

Thus truth has been converted into a lie; the heavenly substance, made to minister to vice; and that which was ordained to life has become pollution, wretchedness, and death.

VI. We are next conducted, by the parable, to the misery of the wretched youth who left the house of his father.

He involved himself in poverty. His substance is gone; he becomes a slave; and in his degradation he is sent into the fields to tend swine. He is perishing with hunger, and strives to satisfy himself with the husks that the swine did eat. On all these particulars we might dwell, as illustrated by the present state of the Gentiles; but as the time will not allow, we shall confine our attention to the circumstance which the prodigal himself mentions, "And I perish with hunger." This, alas! is the case of millions at this moment. The exceeding great famine has arisen, and spread over all the land. Two circumstances are to be solemnly considered,—they hunger; and having not the means of supplying that, they are in danger of perishing.

They hunger for knowledge.

It is not in the nature of the human soul to be satisfied with error, which brings no permanent evidence, especially religious error. The proof of this is, that where error reigns there is incessant change, an everlasting fluctuation of opinion; and at every change the mazes only become more deep and intricate. There is no supply of truth for the mental appetite. The people gaze on darkness; a horizon filled with clouds; flitting, false, and transient meteors. The orb of truth is set, "and the stars withdraw their shining." The people "look for light, and behold darkness."

They pine for rest of spirit.

None feel more deeply than the heathen the want of atonement. One striking feature in the character of the Gentile world is, they all feel that they are under wrath. It abideth upon them. When shall the troubled conscience find peace? Mark their unavailing efforts to obtain it; their bloody sacrifices, their painful pilgrimages, their horrid penances. These they offer to God; and he rejects them. They then turn to Satan, to bribe him with gifts and honours, while he darkens their eyes more deeply, and revels in their miseries. All are husks that the swine did eat; and the people strive to fill themselves in vain. Nothing but the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, can effectually purge the conscience from dead works.

They pine for happiness.

In this the soul of man is true to itself. For the rich pasture he has left, man bleats from instinct. He sighs for the bread in his Father's house. There is a good which man finds not. This proves the great truth, that he is not a source of happiness to himself. He looks abroad; he joins himself to one creature or another, which he finds to be only a broken cistern, and soon abandons. Nothing but the enjoyment of God can satisfy the mind of man. All things beside this are mere husks that the swine eat. But if you, my brethren, hunger for this substantial food, it is not in vain. To you the heavens declare the true God, providence reveals him, and ministers preach him. But

the Gentile world may say, "I perish with hunger." To them the heavens do not declare him, though their sun shines as bright as ours; and to their minds providence only appears as a conflict of various powers, concerning which they entertain the most crude and extravagant notions. Nor is there among them a man of a thousand to show them the things which belong to their peace; no lover of Christ to say,

"O let me commend my Saviour to you!"

And are there among them no thoughts of the future, no hungerings after future bliss? There are. The greatest labours, and most severe penances are directed to this. They have the painful thirst for happiness hereafter. They know that they must die; but they know not where they shall find their destined place. Their glittering dreams vanish. "I have seen in none of them," says an observer, (Mr. Ward,) "any of the hope which is as an anchor of the soul." The doctrine of the transmigration of the soul is the most common among the heathen; and it inspires the most gloomy anticipations. To them all is dark. No light of immortality breaks upon the tomb. They have no joyous assurance that when they are "absent from the body" they shall be "present with the Lord." Proud, indeed, are many of their mausoleums, from the pyramids of Egypt to the massy structures of Hindostan. The learned have travelled to read the inscriptions upon these splendid erections. They have copied those inscriptions, and placed them on the pages of their own books. Go and read, and see if the hand of paganism ever recorded this consoling truth, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: even so, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

O sad and melancholy state of the millions of our race, to die without hope!

VII. But a brighter scene begins to unfold itself. It is presented to us in two parts: the repentance of the son, and the compassion of the father.

"He came to himself." A sinful state has been justly considered a state of infatuation; in which the understanding is darkened, the judgment perverted, the imagination dominant, as in madness itself. But this is no where so exemplified as in Gentilism.

Is it madness when the plainest truth produces no conviction? The world had a beginning, and therefore there is a God, by whom it was made. The pagan perceives not this obvious consequence.

Is it madness when every appetite and passion displays itself without restraint? Such is the state of the heathen. Check and control are not found in false religion.

Is it madness to be furious and mischievous? Then let the savage barbarity, the malignant cunning, the implacableness, the unmercifulness of pagans, present them to us as in this wretched condition.

Is it madness to walk in an ideal world, filled with fantastic, polluted, fearful images, of which there is not an archetype in nature and truth? Such is paganism. All is imagination; their gods, their morals, their hopes, their fears, their joys. Of every heathen it may be said, "He walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain." "A deceived heart hath turned him aside; neither hath he understand-

ing to deliver his soul, and to say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

From this state he awakes. But is this effect produced without the intervention of means? They are not mentioned in the parable, but left to be supplied by the mind of the reader. For when the parable was delivered, the time was not come for fully declaring that by the preaching among the Gentiles of the unsearchable riches of Christ, they were to be brought back to God. But the publicans and sinners, with respect to whom the parable was spoken, were not without means brought to Christ. They heard him preach; they wondered at his words; and they came to themselves. Of this we have several examples, such as that of the Syrophenician woman, and of the woman that was a sinner. O no! never will the Gentiles come to themselves, never be awakened, but by the ministry of the Gospel. Some nations there are who have for ages been left to themselves; but we find none among them who have returned to their Father, and recovered the primitive religion. I grant that, as the afflictions of the prodigal were a means of dispelling his delusion, so the wretchedness which paganism has induced in its subjects is an inward restlessness. They hunger, as we have seen: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." But in the heathen this feeling is indefinite; it is a feeling after an unknown good. How should they return to their Father, before they know that one exists? How should they return to a Father's house, the remembrance of which has faded away from their minds; or hunger for the food which he has to give, till they know something of its nature, and are invited to partake of it?

Have you not remarked, that the Gospel is the appointed means of awakening repentance in the heart? "Repent ye," said Christ. "Repent ye," said Peter to the Jews. "Repent," said Paul to the Athenians. Nor is there any other instrument which can produce it. For true repentance is not merely regret for sin, as an evil to be punished. The law can produce that: it is the natural effect of punishment upon base and uncorrected minds, and abounds in hell. But the repentance of the Gospel is conviction of the evil of sin as a transgression of the law which is holy, just, and good. It is holy shame; love; a sense of obligation; hatred of sin, as sinful; a softening, elevating, sanctifying principle. The Gospel produces this by the view which it gives of the Divine character. The love of God is the first recollection which it awakens in the mind of a wretched prodigal. He thinks of a Father, and of a Father's house, and of a happier state; and to him that Father appears still compassionate; and that Father's house is yet open to receive him. A flood of tenderness then pours itself into his spirit, and mingles with his shame and sorrow. His heart flies before his steps, and suffers him not to rest until he reaches his home, and at his Father's feet makes the confession, "I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

This effect is to be produced among the Gentiles by the operation of the same views; but the views must be given by the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God. They will be given wherever that Gospel is fully and faithfully declared. A God long rejected is still declared to be their Father; the Father's house is ready to receive

every returning prodigal; the gate of access is set wide open; and the promise of reconciliation is proclaimed. What softening considerations are these to the exiled millions of the wretched family of the younger son! Yes, when the Gospel shall be preached, all the love of the Father shall be displayed. The heavens declare his glory, and all nature spreads him to the sight. Their fruitful showers and seasons show his sun shining and his rain falling upon the unjust and the unthankful. But above all, they will know what that Father has been doing even for them during their absence from his house, and while their willing darkness curtailed them from his dispensations of truth and grace. They will learn that his beloved Son had died for them; that the house inhabited for ages by the elder branch of the family had been opened expressly for them; that every preparation had been made for their return; that messengers had been despatched to seek them, and to persuade them to come, for that all things were now ready; that many had actually returned; and that the Father's eye is even now looking out, with all the anxiety of love, for all the rest to follow their example; his heart yearning over Simeon, who is not, and Benjamin, who is not.

Here lies the power of the Gospel to bring men to themselves: and millions are the Gentiles who have already bounded at the sound, and, overwhelmed with distress and shame, have said, "I will arise and go to my Father." And the attempt to bring all nations to the same obedience of faith shall succeed. A sight more glorious than any that has yet been witnessed shall be seen,—a penitent world, prostrate before the great Father; and God reconciled to his once disobedient offspring. Angels press around to survey the wondrous scene.

The subject applies itself,

1. To our fears.

The case of the elder brother is instructive. The Jews, offended at the calling of the Gentiles, would not go in, and they still remain without. This elder brother, in his turn, is to be pitied. Ages have passed over since his refusal; and still he is without, brooding in discontent and malignity over the kind reception of the prodigal. No father's smile is upon him; and he too is perishing with hunger. May God succeed the efforts which are made to subdue his prejudice and bring him in! We may not sin precisely in the same manner that the Jews did in our Saviour's time, and yet may participate in their guilt. Indifference to the missionary work is almost as criminal as direct hostility. They were offended that Jewish missionaries were employed in attempts to convert the Gentiles, and bring them into the Church of God. If you oppose the same work, or are indifferent to it, you share in the guilt of their unfeelingness. What, though the African differs in his skin, and the Hottentot in his intellect, he is still thy brother. Though oceans divide thee from the distant savage, he is still thy brother. Beware of sinning against God by either opposing or standing aloof from that work of mercy which God is carrying on in the earth.

2. To our pity.

Who are we but branches of the younger part of the family already saved? Have we no pity for those who yet remain in yonder lands of darkness? Have we just escaped the shipwreck, and can we be

deaf to the cries of our drowning friends whom we have left behind, and who with shrieks and cries implore our aid? You have this feeling of mercy. Here are the messengers of mercy ready to carry the joyful tidings. O assist them on their way!

3. To our joyous feeling.

A thrilling sound of joy is raised by the Church when a lost brother is brought home. What then shall be the joy when myriads are brought home! when a nation shall be born at once! when the world shall bow at the feet of our Saviour, and not a lost wanderer from God shall be found through all the earth!

SERMON LXXXVIII.—*The Ascension.*

“Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,” Psalm lxxviii, 18.

WHEN Jesus Christ joined himself to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, he explained to them the passages in the Psalms and in the prophets which related to himself; to his character and offices, to his sacrificial offering, and to the redemption of man by him. It would have been highly interesting to have been present at this conversation. The comments of this infallible interpreter would have enabled us to understand many an important and difficult passage of Scripture. We need not suppose, however, that the substance of that conversation was lost. The two who heard it would, no doubt, report it to the other disciples; and it would be among those things which the Spirit was to bring to the remembrance of those who were first to preach the Gospel to the world, and then to write the doctrines they preached in the imperishable records of Scripture. It is this circumstance which makes the New Testament an infallible comment upon the Old. When any passage from the Old Testament is quoted in the New, and thus applied, by the authority of inspiration, to Christ, his character, offices, and work, we cannot be wrong in giving it an interpretation of which the apostles have supplied the principle. We cannot be wrong in explaining more fully, in their references to Christ, such passages as are represented as receiving their fulfilment in him. Of this number is the passage read as the text. It was written, indeed, primarily on a different occasion, but yet a very interesting one. The ark of God had now been some time in the house of Obed-edom, in comparative obscurity; and David, in his pious zeal, resolved to remove it, and place it upon Mount Zion, where, afterward, the temple of Solomon was built to receive it. It was removed in solemn procession. On this occasion the words of the text were composed and sung: “Thou hast ascended on high.” The ark, with the glory connected with it, constituted the symbol, the visible representation of the Divine presence; and therefore doth the psalmist say, thus referring to the solemn procession which accompanied the ark as it was triumphantly borne up to the sacred mount, “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive.”

The words, no doubt, had thus an important, but partial reference to the Jews; but we take the authority of Paul, and consider the whole transaction as relating principally to our Lord's ascension into heaven. This is the application of the subject which he makes in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The ark, then, was a type of the sacred body of Jesus, the residence of Divinity itself. The ark had been, before its triumphant removal, in circumstances of humiliation and privacy; and thus was represented that humiliation to which Christ submitted, before he ascended to possess the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. The removal of the ark to Mount Zion was a great type of the ascension of our Lord to the throne of the universe; and the blessings received by the children of Israel in consequence, represent those spiritual donations of victory and consolation which the Church of Christ receives in consequence of the exaltation of her Head. This seems to be the proper meaning of the passage, and of the circumstances with which it was connected.

I. We shall consider the fact here mentioned, "Thou hast ascended on high."

II. We shall notice certain interesting circumstances connected with it.

III. The particular circumstances of exaltation ascribed to Christ.

IV. The great results.

I. The fact stated in the text: "Thou hast ascended on high."

This was literally fulfilled in the person of our Lord. After having lived awhile on earth; after having offered his body as a sacrifice for sin; after having been raised from the dead; after having shown himself alive to his disciples by many infallible proofs; then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, in the presence of the whole Church, then collected together, he was taken up into heaven.

This fact is proved by evidence the same as that by which the other principal facts of the New Testament are proved. It is the accomplishment of prophecy. Such important predictions as we find in the text would not otherwise have been fulfilled. If this fact have not occurred, "then is our faith vain, we are yet in our sins." Had he not been incarnated, he could not have died; had he not been raised from the dead, we should not have had the assurance of the acceptance of his sacrifice; and had he not ascended into heaven, he would not have appeared in the presence of God for us, nor received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost. Had there existed a Church, she would still have been in tears, comfortless, and destitute of the spiritual presence of her Lord. The fact rests on the evidence of credible witnesses. It is one in which they could not be mistaken. That is allowed on all hands. And that they were honest in their statements respecting both the resurrection and ascension, is proved by the whole of their character, and the way in which they sealed their testimony by their sufferings and death. A person's dying for an opinion does not necessarily prove that opinion to be true. But the apostles died, not for an opinion, but in attestation of facts. When a man suffers and dies to attest facts which he had sufficient means of ascertaining, having no worldly interests to serve in exhibiting and recommending them, his sufferings and death give the strongest attestation to the facts, because they prove the sincerity of the witness, and that in a point on

which he could not be mistaken. But the proof that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven did not rest merely on the testimony of the apostles. It was exhibited before all the dwellers at Jerusalem who had come together on the day of pentecost, and were witnesses of that great miracle, the gift of tongues. All that were then the disciples of Christ were known to be illiterate men and women. They were the same who had witnessed his ascension; they had been tarrying at Jerusalem, that they might be endued with power from on high. The appointed time came; the Spirit was poured out on the whole body of the Church, and they all spake with tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And in reference to the gift of the Spirit, the fact of the ascension is daily receiving fresh accessions of evidence. He promised, while in the world, that when he went to the Father he would send the Comforter, who should abide with the Church for ever. Now, all those who believe in him, thus put the truth of his religion to the test; and they are not disappointed. Believing in him, they received a power which they were conscious they did not possess before; a power to break off their sins; a power which changed all their principles, and gave a new direction to all their desires; which inspired strength, and gave consolation and rich enjoyment; which produced a radical moral change; elevated their affections to things spiritual and heavenly, and made them new creatures in Christ. Every time they receive an increase of this moral strength, which enables them to combat their foes, and to obtain the victory through a power which they feel is not their own, so often do they feel the proof, both that their Lord is risen from the dead, and that he hath ascended on high and received gifts for men.

II. After these observations on the fact itself, let us consider some of the circumstances attending it.

Some of these are given in the narrative of the evangelists; and some are added in the text, and other parts of the psalm.

The evangelist tells us that Jesus Christ led his disciples out as far as Bethany, and that he lifted up his hands and blessed them. There is an importance in this circumstance which will justify remark. It is not merely that he led them to Bethany, although this is remarkable. There is something interesting in this choice of the place from which he should ascend to heaven. It was the residence of the family which he honoured with his friendship, and from which he had received such marked attention; the place where dwelt Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, whom he loved. But the circumstance which appears to me to be most important is this, that he "lifted up his hands and blessed them." We see the temper in which he left the world; a world which despised and rejected him; and a world which clamoured for his blood, and shed it. Yet we see him, in leaving the world, manifesting the same spirit which was so evident on the cross, when he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His last act when he left the world was to lift up his hands and bless.

We are not to suppose that this blessing was for the apostles merely. The blessing was deposited with them, but intended for the world. At the same time he commanded them to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel. In virtue of the blessing he gave them, they went; and others were blessed through them. And this is a blessing that has

been continued to the world from that time to the present. The blessing of Christ still rests on his Church; and his gracious intention is, that by his Church it should be distributed among "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."

Another interesting circumstance connected with this event is found in the declaration of the angels after Christ had been received up into heaven, and a cloud had concealed him from the sight of them who were henceforth to see him no more till their mortal nature had put on immortality. While they were following their ascending Lord with their eager sight, angels appeared unto them, and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." We are thus taught that his future coming to judgment is connected with the facts of his past mortal life. It is well for us to look back to examine these facts. Faith, and hope, and love, receive new life from these devout meditations on the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. We are, however, especially taught to connect with his ascension into heaven the expectation of his coming again. As often as we contemplate the fact of his ascending on high, so often should we be reminded that in like manner he shall come, with his holy angels, that he may sit on the throne of judgment, and decide on the eternal condition of mankind. Let us write this on our hearts; let us recollect that for all the help derived from the influences of his Spirit, all the knowledge derived from the ministry of the word, all the opportunities we possess of acquainting ourselves with God, and making our calling sure, every one shall have to give account to that same Jesus who ascended up on high, and shall in like manner come again that he may judge the world in righteousness. But,

III. The text furnishes some particulars not found in the history.

The apostles saw what was transacted on this side the cloud; the psalmist, in the spirit of prophecy, saw what took place beyond it. "Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive." We have here an allusion to the ancient practice of military triumphs. A successful commander, on his return from his conquests, was honoured with a triumph. Let us suppose, in order to illustrate the text, that a province in some extensive empire is in a state of rebellion. A commander is sent to reduce it to subjection and obedience. He succeeds, and takes the heads of the revolt prisoners. He calls it leading captivity captive. He fastens them to his chariot wheels, as he returns to the metropolis of the empire, and receives gifts which he distributes among his followers. Apply this to our Lord's ascension. What province in the vast dominions of God is in a state of rebellion? Can we hesitate as to the answer we should give when we recollect the history of the world? Look at its present state. Mark the enmity of the human heart against the authority and law of God. Here we have the province in which rebellion has reared up its standard against the Majesty of heaven. Who, then, were the leaders of the rebellion brought into captivity by Jesus Christ, and led captive by him when he ascended in triumph? Doubtless, the fallen spirits; those who were suffered to have access to man as his seducers, and who succeeded in alienating his heart from God. No man, believing the Bible, can

doubt this. Satan is the god of the wicked; and he who doubts the doctrine of diabolical agency, may doubt any other doctrine in the Bible. Who was the person appointed to counteract the power of Satan, to rescue rebellious, but seduced and deceived man, and to turn him from darkness to light, and the power of Satan unto God? Christ himself, the well beloved Son of God. Where was the battle contested? Chiefly in Gethsemane and on Calvary. What were the arms he employed to secure the conquest? He went alone without the camp. He took the most singular, but the most successful, means to make the victory his own. He conquered the might of Satan by seeming weakness, and gained the victory by submitting to apparent defeat, and surrendering his own life. This is the language of Scripture. Through death he deposed him that had the power of death, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage. Then, when he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, he acquired a power to break the yoke from the neck of all who should believe in him. He led captivity captive. It is true, he seemed for a time to be under the power of his enemies; but then, when he rose again from the dead, the victory was seen to be complete and glorious. Then was all power given to him in heaven and earth. And his work on earth being thus finished, he returned to the home he had left. He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and receiving those gifts for men which have been conferred on his Church, even to the present time. Spoiling principalities and powers, he triumphed over them openly, making a show of them.

IV We proposed to consider the results of the whole. He "received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

I have already told you, that there is an allusion here to those gifts which military commanders received, when they returned successful, paid to them out of the public treasury, for the purpose of being distributed among their followers. But in this warfare Christ had no associates. He trod the wine press alone. His own arm brought salvation, and his right hand sustained him. What then? He received gifts; but, as he had no helpers, he could not receive gifts for them. Pitying, therefore, the rebellious, those who had been enslaved by Satan, and held in captivity under the power of sin and death, he received gifts for them. Yes; while his was the glory of the victory and triumph, the benefit was for man. He "received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God," as reconciled to them by the death of his Son, "might dwell among them."

These gifts are all comprehended in that one great gift, the influences of the Holy Spirit. We might branch out the general subject into many particulars; but they would all come to this, inasmuch as from this one every other receives its efficacy.

When he gave the Spirit, he gave the word; for the Spirit brought to the remembrance of the apostles all things which they were to record. They were to write the words, and to announce the will, of Christ; and the Spirit was given them to lead them into all truth. So that all the directions and promises of the New Testament take the same character ascribed to the Old; and these holy men, too, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Thus are the words of Christ, which

we possess, spirit and life. The best human compositions possess not that impressiveness, that power, those heart-searching qualities, that comforting influence, which our Scriptures possess, and that because they are the word of God. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word is but the expression of the mind of God, accompanied by the sacred influence which first gave it, and which only can render it effectual. What an amazing gift is this! And this is one of the fruits of the ascension. It is not only a perfect revelation of the truth; but is accompanied always with the special presence and agency of its great Author, that it may accomplish his holy and merciful purposes in the hearts of them that believe.

Let it be observed, that there is a two-fold operation, in order to make the word of God the instrument of our salvation. Christ said to Paul, "I send thee to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light." The efficacy of the word depends on the accompanying Spirit; but, his sacred influences being promised, the word, as the instrument, is represented as producing the designed effect. Without those influences, the word would be a mere idea, and the annunciation of it a powerless letter. He has given the light, the light of saving truth; and he opens the closed eyes, and thus enables man to perceive the truth, and, with an humbled heart, to turn to the light which he had so long refused, for the sake of the darkness he loved so well.

In consequence of the ascension of Christ, we have not only the gift of the word, but the ministry too. When he ascended on high, "he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And the efficacy of the ministry, as well as of the word, depends entirely on the accompanying influence of the Divine Spirit. Paul planteth, Apollos watereth; but it is God which giveth the increase. The reason that the preaching of Christ crucified is the power of God unto salvation is not merely that Christ is preached, not merely that there is a full announcement of the truth; but because with this doctrine, and with this alone, God's own living influence is connected. One special office of the Spirit is, to testify of Christ; and when Christ is faithfully preached, the Spirit testifies of him, applies his truth in power to the soul. O let us be thankful for this. In consequence of the ascension of Christ, we have the ministry, not of a dead letter, but of a word made quick and powerful by the influence which accompanies it.—"Lo," said he, "I am with you alway." His Gospel is preached; and he is there to make it spirit and life.

Farther: not only is there the word, and the ministry of it, but a special influence of the Spirit, as distinct both from one and the other.

There is that operation of the Spirit by which men are put into a capacity to repent when they hear the word. If that were not the case, how, then, should God judge the world for not believing in Christ? Wherever the Gospel is preached, it is not only preached with the influences of the Spirit, but the same Spirit is given to prepare men to receive the message. And where the message is not received, there

is a resistance of the Holy Ghost. This constitutes the guilt of impenitent man. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." They had received those preparing influences which gave them moral power; but they would not come to him. They resisted the Spirit in their hearts, the quickening, convincing Spirit, as well as that same Spirit in the word.

There is that gracious work of the Spirit by which he testifies to those who have returned to God, and sought salvation in the prescribed way, that is, by faith in Christ, their pardon and adoption. It is he who inspires the gift of faith, and gives to the believer the undoubted witness that God is reconciled. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." We are not called to live in doubt and darkness, as to our acceptance with God. And then, there is the illumination by which we are shown the work of Christ on the heart, and enabled to conclude that we are in him, because we are new creatures. Religion brings its own evidence with it. It is light throughout. He who has it is reconciled to God, has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, and is enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

To the operation of this Divine Spirit, this precious gift of Christ, we owe all our ability to think, and speak, and act, according to the will of God. The whole of that sanctity by which the soul is prepared for the heaven to which Christ has ascended is his gift, and given in consequence of his ascension. Whoever knows himself, knows well that in him there dwelleth no good thing. The power to pray; to think aright; to speak acceptable words, and to do acceptable actions; to subdue all that is earthly and sinful; to cherish all that is heavenly and holy;—all this results from the ascension of Christ. He pours the Spirit upon men from on high, and makes the barren wilderness a fruitful field; and strengthening them thus with might in the inner man, he enables them to comprehend with all saints that love which passeth knowledge, that they may be filled with all the fulness of God.

And thus, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, is the Divine presence ever with his Church, and in the hearts of all who believe, but who were once rebellious. This union with God, too, is designed to prepare them for that more perfect and intimate union which shall be experienced by the saints in light. He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them; and in his presence shall they find fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

Allow me now, in conclusion, to make a reflection or two.

1. When Jesus Christ was exalted to the right hand of the Father, it was that he might receive honours, as well as that he might bestow blessings.

God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. When God set his Son upon his holy hill of Zion, he not only said, "And let all the angels of God worship him," but declared this to be his will, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. This, then, leads me most seriously to inquire of you, as in the presence of God, of you, whose memories have now been refreshed as to the ascension of your Saviour into heaven, whether you have thus honoured the Son, thus submitted to his government and control, thus

sought to be conformed to his image? Have you yet been brought to call Jesus Lord, to the glory of God? In this subject we are all deeply interested. None can thus call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. And thus to call him Lord, supposes that we make him, as to ourselves, all that he claims to be. He is the Lord of our conduct. He has the right to govern us in all circumstances, and to direct all our actions. He is Lord of our affections. He must be the object of our supreme regard. We are required to consider ourselves as the servants of this exalted Lord, and bound to engage in this service with all our heart and soul, and for the whole of our life.

You, then, who have lived according to the course of this world, in open violation of the Divine laws, rejecting the influences of the good Spirit of God; who have lived under the power of sin, submitting yourself to the prince of this world, and his usurped dominion, instead of him to whom you and all creatures owe allegiance; you who are still in actual rebellion against God, notwithstanding all that he has done for you; though your Lord poured out his blood for you, and died that you might never die; though he rose again, and has ascended into heaven to be there your Mediator and Advocate; though he has obtained all these wondrous gifts, in order to accomplish your salvation; yet are you still rebellious. You arm yourselves against him, and oppose his rightful claim. Instead of being his disciples, you are still of the world, still among those over whom shall, by and by, be stretched the rod of iron, instead of the sceptre of mercy. O put this case to your consciences. Ask yourselves the question, "Whether do I oppose the claims of Christ, or yield myself to his authority?" You have been called to behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world; to view his condescension and kindness; but the time is at hand, when you shall see him coming in his glory. You shall see him coming in that wrath which is most terrible, which can never be quenched, which burns to the lowest hell; that fearful wrath, called so emphatically, "The wrath of the Lamb." Thus shall you see him, and wail because of him. Well was it said, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Turn to him, while yet that wrath delays, and he will have mercy upon you.

2. I observe, that none of us have any proof of our being properly in subjection to Christ, and as being his indeed, unless we have received his gifts. "He received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

It is easy enough now to say to Christ, "Lord, Lord!" There is nothing difficult in professing his religion in the present day; nothing difficult in making a great parade about the orthodoxy of your opinions, in attending the ordinances of his house. Where is the shame of this? where the cross we take up? All these are no proofs, either to others or to ourselves, that we are his. We must look for less delusive ones. We must ask whether the Lord God dwells among us. Is his sacred, hallowing presence in our hearts, softening our tempers, rectifying our wills, impressing his own image on our nature? Are we thus personally partakers of the spiritual gifts of Christ? If we have not the spirit of Christ, we are none of his. Let me press this subject upon you. We may well say, in the present day, this day of general pro-

fession, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father;" to boast of your Church privileges, or of your orthodoxy, or liberality, or zeal; "for God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree.—Recollect, he baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. Here is the proof that we are his. If we are living under the baptism of Christ, there will be in us the sin-consuming, the soul-purifying Spirit.

3. If Christ has thus ascended into heaven, let the humble believer in him never cease, all the way he goes across the wilderness of life, to remember that he has a Friend in heaven, an Advocate above.

The gifts he has to bestow are not exhausted. All those spiritual blessings which he has imparted to his Church from the beginning are but portions of that infinity to which we have all access. It has pleased the Father that in him should dwell all the fulness of the God-head. All we want is in him. Strength, light, comfort, victory over our enemies, Christ can give us; for he has led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. And this fact, so calculated to encourage all who trust in him, love him, and serve him, does likewise prove the accountableness and guilt of all who reject his salvation. If they were not able to obtain the victory over evil by the power which Christ is willing to impart; if it were necessary for them to sin, and it could not be avoided; then their plea of excuse might be allowed. But captivity is led captive; sin is condemned in the flesh; and victory is promised to all who contend. Spring up, then, to the contest, and through your conquering Lord, you shall conquer too.

Let not these doctrines be lost on your minds. Enter the field of conflict, and fight the good fight of faith. Fix your eye on him who has overcome, and is now set down on the throne of his Father. Hear him saying to you, and be encouraged, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me on my throne; even as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father on his throne." Thus shall the Lord God dwell among us for ever.

SERMON LXXXIX.—*Life in Christ.*

"In him was life," John i, 4.

THE other evangelists introduce their narratives with an account of the birth and humanity of Christ: St. John, full of the high character of his Lord, begins with his divinity.

There is a striking resemblance between the opening of the book of Genesis and the opening of this Gospel: the same Divine person is spoken of in both places, and in both creation is ascribed to him; only the Creator is here introduced as performing another and higher act, that of redemption.

Jesus Christ is here called the Word, because he made known to men the revelations of God. He is also denominated God; by which term absolute divinity is to be understood; for he is said to have been "in the beginning," and therefore eternal; and the creation of all things is ascribed to him. Yet was he distinct from the Father; for

he was "with God." The language used by the evangelist presents two ideas; distinct personality, and unity or sameness of essence.—This doctrine we are bound to believe on the testimony of inspiration: There is in the Godhead a personal distinction and an essential unity. We know the fact, and adore the mystery. So firmly, Christians, does your faith rest upon Christ as a Divine person; and it is full of comfort. The arm you repose upon is not the arm of a creature: were it such, you would sink in the time of your greatest need and trial. You may indeed rejoice in the greatness of his power: strong is his arm, and high is his right arm, and his merit is infinite. Were he less than God, he could neither redeem you by his death, nor save you by his grace. The words of the text are a farther prosecution of the apostle's argument for the Godhead of the Saviour; but they open to us other and interesting views of the glory and greatness of the eternal Word; and to these I call your attention. "In him was life."

I. Life in him is original and independent life.

This marks, with the utmost certainty, the divinity of his nature.—It cannot be said of any other being, in the same sense in which it was said of him, "In him was life." The expression cannot mean that he was animate merely, for that would not be distinctive; but that in him was life as its origin and source,—unoriginated and essential life.—Other beings have life, but it is not in them as a natural and independent principle: it is not in them as the stream is in the fountain, but as it is in the channel.

The body has life, but not in itself. The body of Adam was formed before life was communicated to it; and all its parts existed before they were compounded into a body. Life may depart, and yet all the organization of the body remain complete still. Nor even has the soul life in itself; it has no natural immortality: this is contrary to Scripture, which declares that God "only hath immortality;" and that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being," our whole being.

But the text calls our attention to a Being whose nature it is to live; and who would live were all beings beside annihilated. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

II. A second glory of Christ is, that he is the source of life to every thing that lives.

This is one of the views under which David considers Jehovah, to whom he says, "With thee is the fountain of life." The giving of life is one of the most surprising instances of Divine power; and, like the bringing of a thing out of nothing, at once it convinces the judgment that he who can give life must be God himself.

See this display of Divine power in vegetable life. Unsightly seeds are cast into the earth; they unfold, change their form into one that is totally different, and produce every variety of scent and beauty. See it in animal life. Man can make images of things; he can give grace and expression to statues, but no life; no united power of the creatures can produce this; here is the proof of human weakness. But see the

work of God : Adam is raised from the dust ; he moves at his own will ; he sees, hears, tastes, smells, feels ; he handles and ascertains the forms and distances of things.

See it, above all, in intellectual life. Here we behold all the wonders of knowledge, judgment, reasoning, memory, imagination, the high thoughts, the swelling feelings, the boundless improvement, of which the mind of man is capable.

If life is given by Christ, then Christ is God.

III. Christ is "the life," as St. John calls him, because with him alone it lay to reverse the sentence of condemnation, and give life to a condemned world.

This is a deeply important subject ; and it is no less in proof of divinity than the other. The exclusive power to give life to the condemned was often claimed by Christ : "I am the bread of life ;" "The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if a man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever ; and the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

To enter into this subject, let us observe, that as all men have sinned, by the law of God they are subject to the punishment of death : law cannot, in its own nature, admit of pardon ; were it to admit of this, it would cease to be law. It is the peculiar scheme of the Gospel to answer the demand of law by substitution. An adequate substitute cannot be a creature, because a creature can do nothing beyond his duty ; an adequate substitute must be one who is not naturally under the law, because his merit only can be transferable to others ; a Divine substitute is the only reason for turning away the demands of the law from the person who is actually guilty. Who, then, shall be found to undertake the redemption of lost mankind but Jesus ? "In him was life ;" and to him we may truly say, "The help did in thy bosom lie ;" nor could any other have accomplished the mighty task. Some say it is presumptuous to assert that the world could be redeemed and saved by no other means than the sacrificial death of the incarnate Son of God : but if a finite price were sufficient, an infinite one was superfluous. If God gave his own Son, the case was extreme, and no less a ransom would have been available : "In him," and in him only, "was life" for a world placed by sin under the sentence of eternal death.

IV. The Word incarnate and glorified is the source of spiritual life.

This life is a distinct principle, and results flow from it very different from those which flow from either animal or intellectual life. To prove this, only a few remarks will be necessary.

Take the instance of that change which renders a man what we call religious. Lately he regarded only earthly things ; why does he now seek God, grace, and heaven ? As an animal, no change has taken place in him ; and as an intellectual being, he is the same that he was before ; nor, perhaps, has he received any new information : yet the truth which he before knew now affects him very differently from what it did ; it has turned his heart to God. What is the cause ? The

apostle answers, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Take the case of conscience. Intellectually, a distinction between moral good and evil exists in the mind; and a judgment of things is formed by this standard. To the broader vices some distaste is shown; and for the ordinary virtues, which affect the interests of men, some approval is cherished and expressed. But this is not the conscience of a Christian. It hates evil, because evil is hateful in itself, and hateful to God. It shrinks from sin universally, and delights in universal holiness. This is no new power added to the intellect; and perhaps is not attended by any great increase of knowledge.—How, then, has conscience become so tender and so discriminating? Christ has become the life of the man. The whole secret lies here.

Take the case of faith. Before the change in question took place, the faith of the individual was mere assent; now it is effort and trust, in order to attain the good offered in the promises.

Take prayer. It is desire, ardent desire, which will not turn away from the pursuit till the blessing is obtained. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Take love to God. It is no longer mere sentiment, but ardent affection, which delights in him, and maintains ceaseless intercourse with him, by acts of faith and holy desire.

Take benevolence to man. It fixes upon his highest interests, weeps over a fallen spirit, or rejoices with the angels when a sinner repenteth.

These are high principles and feelings. The reality, the joys, and the sanctities of religion are all founded upon them. They all show a new, a most important and blessed principle introduced into the heart of man. This we call spiritual life. The source of it is Christ; for "the Son quickeneth whom he will." "In him was life."

V Life is the sense of vigour and energy.

We have a beautiful representation of this in the parable of the vine and the branches. United to Christ, as the branch is united to the vine, there is that in man which raises him above all that he is as man, and invests him, in fact, with what I may justly call a supernatural character.

Tell me, is it in man, as man, to cease from sin? But he that is dead with Christ, by virtue of a spiritual crucifixion, and alive from the dead by the power of the resurrection, is "free from sin," so that it no longer has dominion over him.

Tell me, is it in man, as man, to find his highest pleasures in things Divine and spiritual? Look at the fact, the coldness with which they are regarded even by those who do not condemn them; and the eager pursuit of earthly things, as necessary to happiness. Here you see man as man. But the supernatural man exhibits a marvellous elevation of thought and feeling. He can no more rest in these low things than an angel can; and, like an angel, his only bliss is in beholding and adoring God.

Tell me, is it in man, as man, to love his enemies, and to bless his persecutors? Yet this is the lofty character which is given to him to whom Christ is the life. He meditates upon the wrongs which he

has received; but they awaken neither anger nor malice, but a deeper pity, a tenderer compassion for the offenders.

Tell me, again, is it in man, as man, to regard afflictions and infirmities with any other sentiment than that of grief and anxiety, in even the most philosophical? Was ever any thing above mere resignation ever looked for? and was not this regarded as a virtue of a high and rare class? But the men in whom Christ lives "glory in tribulation." Hear St. Paul on this subject: "We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." For the removal of the thorn in the flesh he brought the Lord thrice, when he received as an answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee." He felt as a man; but when he found that it was the will of his Lord, rather to help him in affliction, than to deliver him out of it, he says, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

I ask, finally, is it in man, as man, to look without dread on death? or if he be passive, is death to him an object of hope and desire? Yet to this the grace of Christ has raised man; and I know of nothing that proves more fully that this grace is in truth that which man cannot have by nature. "I would not live always," says an ancient saint. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," says the Christian apostle. Many reasons generally exist to lead a Christian to desire to live; and weak faith will always diminish the love of heaven; but when the scene approaches, and his work is manifestly done, then the principle of which we speak rises in all the majesty of its triumph over death; and while others are dragged through the dark portal which leads into eternity, as slaves and prisoners, he passes through as a sharer in the victory of his Lord.

Such is the life which Christ imparts; such the mighty and elevating energy which that life gives to the human soul.

I need not dwell upon the fact, that Christ is the administrator of eternal life. The resurrection of the body, and the immortality of the soul, are both from him. "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Some practical conclusions must now close our illustrations of this subject. It teaches,

1. The importance of the Gospel to us.

It is the promulgation of the doctrine of life. It shows what is possible, and how it may be attained. All we know, or can know, on these subjects, in the present life, is derived from the Gospel, which has "brought life and immortality to light," and which its Author has commanded should be preached to every creature.

2. The design of the Gospel, however made known to you, is to induce you to think on these subjects, and to resolve to seek the grace of life, according to the Divine will, and the order which God has established.

O receive not this truth in vain!

3. The means of obtaining life from Christ is simply that of "coming" to him.

"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," was his com-

plaint to the ancient Jews. We are to come, that we may receive. How affectingly free and gracious are his invitations and promises! Hear his voice, ye penitents and weak believers; and draw near to him, that he may give you life eternal. And let the strongest believer remember that there is more abundant life in Christ than he has yet received. "I am come," says he, "that they might have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Come daily, hourly; come every moment. Come especially in danger, affliction, and death. Nothing is required but that you come to Him in whom all fulness dwells. Remember who has affectingly said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

SERMON XC.—*The Parable of the Wise and foolish Virgins.*

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh," Matthew xxv, 1-13.

THERE were two very different reasons which induced Jesus Christ to speak in parables: one, that his hearers might not understand; the other, that they might understand the more readily. Accordingly, we find two general classes of parables recorded in the Gospels: first, those which were spoken to many, but explained only to a few; such as our Lord addressed to curious hearers; to persons who indeed asked him questions, but who did not earnestly and sincerely desire to come to the knowledge of the truth. The mystical discourses delivered to these he refuses to explain to them, reserving the explanation for his disciples alone. Whether this was intended as a punishment for those who pretended to inquire after the truth, but who desired not to come to the knowledge of it; that thus "hearing, they might hear, and not understand; seeing, they might see, and not perceive;" we cannot say, although it would appear as if this were the case. But other parables were founded on circumstances and customs with which the Jews were well acquainted; on matters familiar to common observation; and which were calculated to convey more clearly than any other mode of teaching, especially to persons who wished to be instructed, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The parable read as the text belongs to this class. It has a reference to a well known and very solemn custom of the Jews. The Jewish feasts were mostly held in the night; and as marriage feasts were generally distinguished above the rest, our Lord often refers to them in the course of his public

teaching. The whole of the parable before us is founded on the customs connected with these marriage feasts. It was usual for the bride to be conveyed to the bridegroom's house at night, the bridegroom himself accompanying the procession. It was customary, likewise, for him to place some females to wait to receive the bride. On this circumstance the parable is founded. Look at the close of the former chapter. Christ there speaks of the rewards he will bestow on his faithful servants at his second coming, and of the punishment he will inflict on the unfaithful. "Blessed is that servant," he says, "whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing," employed in the work appointed him. "Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." "Then," says the parable, at that time, "shall the kingdom of heaven," the Gospel dispensation, in its final results, "then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

In order to conduct you to the great moral of this parable,—the moral which the great Teacher himself impresses on us with so much emphasis,—it will be necessary for me to call your attention to a few observations.

I. In the first place there was a common likeness and resemblance between the wise and foolish virgins; a resemblance that continued for a considerable time; so that the real differences were not detected till the approach of the bridegroom.

All were equally the professed friends of the bridegroom; all were dressed in the garments usually worn at such festivals; all had taken their lamps and kindled them; all had occupied the place assigned to them; and all, while the bridegroom tarried, and they waited for his coming, slumbered and slept. You will observe, that whatever real differences there were between them, there were no obvious marks of distinction. Though five were wise, and five foolish, they were not distinguished till the coming of the bridegroom; they were not even suspected. What, then, are we to understand by this? We have here a representation of the professing Church, among whose members there is a common character and resemblance, as among men, though a hidden and radical difference, as before God. Look at the ten virgins. All seem alike; nor was the difference made apparent till the bridegroom came. Look, then, at the visible Church. Are not all its members professedly the friends of Christ? Have they not all been baptized in the same name? Do they not all exhibit the same general deportment? They all call Jesus, Lord. They observe his Sabbaths, they assemble at his ordinances, they meet together in his name, they profess to wait for his coming from heaven. Even in this they all agree. There is not a man who receives the Christian faith, who does not believe that Christ, the Saviour of men, will come a second time to judge the world. When we approach the Lord's table, it is that we may show forth the Lord's death till he come. Here, then, is the agreement.

II. In the second place, we may observe, that there was a most important and serious distinction. "Five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

The wisdom of the wise was shown in their making a proper preparation for the future. The folly of the others was shown by their making no such provision. The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps, thus providing for wants which they knew would arise. The foolish only took a present supply, careless as to the necessity of feeding the flame with fresh oil as that was consumed which they took with them. The great difference, then, lies here, that a part took oil with them, and a part did not. What did our Lord mean to teach us by this circumstance, but, that the religion which does not affect the heart,—the transient blaze of profession, and partial conformity to his laws, which yet leaves the principles of the mind unchanged and unaffected,—will avail us nothing. There is a religion that may be professed without being felt. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord," said Christ, "and do not the things which I say?" The truth may be received into the understanding, and yet not influence the heart. How many are there who have the knowledge that puffeth up, and have not the charity which edifieth! "If," says the apostle, "we have all knowledge, so as to understand all mysteries, and have not charity, it profiteth us nothing." A declaration this, which supposes that a man may be even greatly learned in the mysteries of religion, and yet possess an unsanctified nature. There have been persons who have even held offices in the Church, whose hearts have not been right with God. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." It is possible that religious impressions may be made on the mind, and on the conscience too, and yet that there shall be no lasting change in the heart. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." It is possible for us to have a great number of virtues and excellencies; to have them by constitution; to acquire them by instruction or example; and yet to have an unrenewed heart. We have an instance in the young ruler in the Gospel; a youth of so many excellent and amiable qualities, that it is said that when Jesus looked upon him he loved him. There was something so attractive in his general character, as to excite affection for him in the great Searcher of hearts; yet, when he was put to the test, and required to leave all and follow his Lord, the principle of self and worldly love triumphed over his love of the truth, and his desire for salvation. Thus it is evident that we may bear the lamp, and have that lamp lighted; that we may so associate with the people of God, as that there shall be no discernible difference between us and them; and yet at the same time the vessel may be destitute of oil. We have not the religion of the heart till we have experienced penitential sorrow on account of our sins; till we have felt our need of Christ as the Saviour of sinners; till we have exercised on the atonement the faith of the heart, and are thus reconciled to God; till we are brought under the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; till love to God becomes

the predominant principle of the soul, and we are changed from the image of Satan to the moral image of God.

III. Let us now notice the delay in the final appearance of the bridegroom. "While the bridegroom tarried."

Before Christ left the world, he warned his disciples of his second coming; but he fixed no time for it. He only left this general injunction, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Sometimes "the coming of Christ" refers to his coming to judge the Jews, and to destroy Jerusalem. In this we find that he tarried beyond the expectation of the disciples. Those who were mindful of his injunctions watched; those who were not mindful, but whose love waxed cold, were surprised by his coming; and while every true Christian escaped those fearful and desolating calamities, the greatest that had ever befallen Jerusalem, the unwatchful and unbelieving were involved in the mighty ruin.

But the more general allusion of this phrase is to the coming of our Lord to judge the world. He shall sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations. But, even in this respect, the bridegroom has tarried beyond the expectation of the people of God in all ages. This is evident, even from some passages in the writings of the apostles. Some of the first Christians believed in the speedy approach of the day of judgment. That knowledge which the Father had reserved to himself, and which was not even committed to the Son, was not possessed by the apostles. "Behold," he said, "behold I come quickly;" and they looked for an advent speedy, according to their own conceptions of speed. And the infidel scorners took advantage of what appeared to them to be delay: "Where," said they, "where is the promise of his coming?" But many ages rolled away, and still the bridegroom tarried. And in the meanwhile they all slumbered and slept. The foolish and the wise virgins, the false and the sincere professors, have alike fallen into the dust, and they sleep the sleep of death. And still does the bridegroom delay his coming; and ages may again roll away before he appears. He is not slack concerning his promise, as men count slackness; but we are told that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The longest periods can make no alteration in his counsels and designs; nor is the difference of time of any consequence to Him who fills the vast round of eternity, to whom time itself is but a point, a nothing.

IV. But though he tarried long, at last he came. "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

There are two or three circumstances here well worth our attention. "At midnight." We are not to understand by this, that he will come literally at midnight. At whatever time he comes, indeed, it will be midnight in some places, but only in some. The term must be taken figuratively. He explained it himself, when he said that he should come "as a thief in the night." And the meaning is, that as midnight is a time of repose, and we are then sunk in forgetfulness, and apprehensive of no danger, so shall it be at the end of the world, except to those who are watching for the appearing of their Lord. He will come as a thief in the night, when men are slumbering, as to all spi-

ritual things ; immersed in business ; eagerly pursuing pleasure ; planning projects which will require long spaces of time for their execution. Christ shall suddenly make his appearance, and summon the busy and negligent race to appear at his bar. The destruction of sinners will come suddenly, because it comes unexpectedly. As when, in the days of Noah, they were marrying and giving in marriage, till the flood came and destroyed them all, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Though then men despised the warning, yet the gathered cloud, and the darkened heavens, and the shaking earth, declared the word of the Lord to be firm as the foundation of the everlasting hills. So at length shall judgment burst from heaven ; the slighted and forgotten Saviour shall come ; and before him, as Judge, shall all nations be gathered.

His coming shall be accompanied with a cry. "At midnight there was a cry made." All the representations of the coming of Christ describe him as coming in pomp and majesty. It might suit his purpose, when he came to redeem the world, to steal into it without honour, to come and shrink from human observation, to be trained up in poverty and humility, for the fulfilment of the purposes for which his Father sent him. Such circumstances might suit the character of his first coming ; but when he comes the second time, recollect that he comes to judge the world. He comes to accomplish the purposes of his mercy in the public acknowledgment of his people, and of his justice in the public punishment of the wicked. And therefore shall he come with the sound of an archangel, and with the trump of God. With him come his holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, leaving heaven for a time in solitude, that its inhabitants may witness the final results of his mediatorial plan, and be present at that most important act by which he shall give up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Then shall the solemn cry awaken a slumbering world, and "all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." A cry of despair, too, from the surprised wicked shall mingle with the general confusion, and increase the awful terrors of that day.

Mark, too, the purport of this cry : "Go ye out to meet him."—What a sound of joy shall that be to the Church of God ! of joy, not to be overpowered by all the terrors of the solemnity ! Is there a saint whom the Saviour's coming shall find alive upon the earth, or whose spirit shall be brought from heaven to receive his body from the grave, who shall not then be inspired with the most exulting joy, and animated expectation, by the cry, "Go ye out to meet him ?" Often has the saint gone out to meet his Lord on earth. Often has his heart beaten with the expectation of meeting him at his table, of finding him at his ordinances. Unseen by the eye of sense, faith often beholds him, and delightfully realizes his presence. But this summons shall not be to meet Christ as we may meet him on earth, but personally, and in all his glory ; to enter into his brightly manifested presence,

"And all eternity employ,
In songs before his throne."

But how different will be the effect of the cry on those who are not prepared to go forth to meet him ! Let us never forget that this is a cry which we all must hear ; a summons which we must all obey. Every one of us must go forth to meet him. Whatever reluctance we

may feel, even though we should oppose, that opposition shall be overcome; for God shall send his angels, both to gather his elect from the four quarters of the earth, and to bring the unhappy culprits in custody before the throne of their Judge. You who have persecuted the truth, must lift up your hands there, stained with the blood of the saints. You who have opposed the spread of his religion, must account for your conduct before Him who is concerned above all things that his truth should be triumphantly diffused through the world. You who have neglected his great salvation, and trampled under foot the blood of the covenant, must appear before him who was pierced and slain for you. You who have had the form of godliness, but denied the power; you who have trifled with his word, and spurned his offered mercy; whatever shades may diversify your characters, you must all awake from your sleep, and go forth to meet him.

V We may now notice the case of the wise and foolish virgins when the bridegroom came. "They rose and trimmed their lamps;" that is, they attempted to trim them.

The wise would do this without any difficulty; they had only to supply the lamp with oil from the vessels they had taken with them, and the light would shine with increasing lustre. The foolish could not do this. Their lamps were gone out; and they had not the means of rekindling the blaze. Here is a subject which, if our hearts are capable of feeling, is calculated to excite us to seek at once for that inward religion which is the only preparation for eternity. Let us dwell upon it for a few moments. The wise found no difficulty in trimming their lamps; so the righteous will find no difficulty in re-assuming the character they bore on earth. Their religion was not one of outward appearance only. It consisted not in bodily services which perish with the body, but was laid up in the vessel of the spirit, and carried by that spirit into a separate state of existence. Faith, and love, and hope, and purity, were all existing in the spirit after death; and they are all there when it is brought by Jesus Christ to join its former partner, and clothe itself with an immortal body. All those inward principles which ever shone in their eyes, and lips, and actions, while in the body, now shine forth in the full lustre that belongs to them. The lamp is trimmed, and burns more brightly than ever. But mark the case of the foolish. They cannot light their lamps. This teaches us that it will then be impossible there to resume the former profession, and to appear to be what we are not. The negligent professor whose vessel was destitute of oil, is now under the all-searching eye of the Judge. When the body is resumed, when the spirit again inhabits its former tabernacle, every inward principle shall then be apparent. Delusion shall no longer be possible. The lip, the eyes, the actions shall express the truth, and only the truth. Every one will then discover, as through a transparent veil, the former hidden unbelief, the darkness and corruption once concealed by their profession of attachment to the bridegroom. No man shall then be able to call Jesus Lord, but under the influence of genuine love to him. The lamp is gone out, and cannot be relighted. The present profession of piety, the appearance of virtue, may serve you well enough while you have only to do with your fellow creatures; but when you hear the midnight cry, "Go ye out to meet him," the mask shall drop off, and

every man be seen in his own proper character. Recollect that if you are not Christians now, there will be no becoming Christians then.—Christ, as Saviour, will address you no more; will receive no more addresses from you. He will then have ceased to be the way to the mercy seat. This is a sad case, and you see it attended by circumstances which show that it is not to be remedied. “Give us of your oil,” exclaim the foolish, in the confusion of their despair: “Not so,” reply the wise. They have none to spare. Virtue cannot be transferred from one to another on earth, much less in that day. The wise will find that they have no more love, no more holiness, than they need for themselves. They add, “Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.” The words are added to fill up and ornament the passage. They convey, however, a general, but very solemn truth, that it shall then be impossible to procure a supply of grace. Whatever freedom of access to the throne of grace we may now possess; however attentive the ear of the Saviour may be to the cry of them who seek to him on earth; yet in that moment the supplies will be cut off, never more to be recovered. If you consider the means by which this oil could have been obtained on earth, you will see that they now exist no more. Grace is now to be received from the influences of the Spirit, whom Christ, as Intercessor, sends into the world; but when he appears to judgment, that intercession will cease, and the supply of the Spirit be withdrawn. We now obtain directions from the word in what manner to apply for mercy and grace; but the word of promise shall then be addressed to us no longer. It shall be laid before the throne of God among the books to be opened for the judgment. The book of the Gospel shall then become a book of law; for according to the Gospel shall God judge the secrets of men’s hearts. Promises shall serve no other purpose than to convince men of their negligence and sin. On earth we derive aid from the services of Christ’s ministers; but these shall in that hour stand among the rest, and be judged themselves. Their mission is at an end, and they are no longer sent to persuade men. Now, it is here you may obtain mercy and grace by applying to God through a Mediator. He stands as a Priest by the altar, to offer up our prayers on his own golden censer. But then, instead of standing before the throne as an Advocate, he shall be seated upon it as our Judge. He will have assumed the robe of judicial authority, and have taken into his hand the rod of iron. In that solemn hour all the methods of supply shall cease, and it shall be irrevocably pronounced, “He that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.”

Lastly. Let us observe the final result: “They that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.”

They that were ready at that time,—the wise, whose lamps were trimmed and burning; they who had been saved by grace through faith, and were made meet for all the felicities of heaven; they who were within the comprehension of the Divine covenant, and the purport of the Divine promise. They who were found ready entered in, and the door was shut; shut upon them when they had entered in. O delightful circumstance! That door shall not be again opened; they who enter into the presence of God, and the joys of the marriage feast, shall never depart; they have entered into the blessedness of heaven;

they are associated with angels ; they are in the temple where God is served day and night, and they shall never leave it ; the door is shut. That same act, however, which shut the wise virgins in, shut the foolish virgins out. When they come and make their vain prayers for the mercy they had once rejected, the answer is, "I know you not ; depart, ye cursed." Such shall be the case with all who are not found ready. They shall be shut out ; shut out from God, from the joy of his presence, the light of his countenance ; shut out from the society of the wise and good ; shut out from the place where sorrow and sighing shall be eternally done away ; shut into that place of darkness and despair where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

These observations are intended to lead you to the great moral, "Watch, therefore."

On this I shall make a few remarks, and then conclude.

There is a sense in which death is all that judgment can be ; particularly in this, that it fixes our eternal condition. To each of us it may be said, that the hour of death is, in effect, the midnight hour when Christ shall come to judge us ; and as that hour is most uncertain, we are therefore enjoined to watch, lest it take us by surprise, and find us unprepared. What is your life but a vapour ? Every moment, for any thing we know, we are standing on the verge of an unalterable state. Is it possible for any man to sleep in these circumstances ? to neglect to prepare to meet his God and Judge ? Is it possible that he can reject offers of mercy and pardon, and slight a Saviour's grace and love ? that he can busy himself with the various events of time, and forget the weighty and solemn realities of eternity ? To rouse us from this terrible carelessness Christ uttered this parable ; and, by the ministers of his word, its solemn truths are still addressed and enforced. Awake, then, awake to righteousness, and sin not. Lay these things seriously to heart. Ask yourselves whether you are prepared for the coming of Jesus. Be not satisfied with being connected with the friends of the bridegroom ; with having the lamp of profession, but your hearts without grace. Awake both from carnal and spiritual delusion, and while you may obtain the holy oil, apply for it.

And then keep awake ; "Watch." Have always an attentive regard to the things of God. Remember that you are hastening to eternity. You are pleasing or displeasing to God, not according to your profession, but according to your actual state and conduct in his sight. Remember that your present actions are the seed which you are sowing, and that the harvest shall be reaped in eternity. Watch, therefore ; keep ever before you the uncertainty of your life ; at an hour when you think not, the Son of man will come ; keep your lamps trimmed, and a plenteous supply of oil in your vessels ; abide in the spirit of holy expectation ; still be waiting for the bridegroom ; be ever in the spirit of prayer and praise, of faith and obedience ; let your whole life be one continued sacrifice to the service of your Master : "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." And at his second coming to judge the world in righteousness, all they that are thus ready shall go in with him to the marriage ; and in his presence shall they have fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

SERMON XCI.—*The Final Hour of the Son of God.*

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come," John xvii, 1.

THE character of Jesus may well be compared to the "light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day:" it was always glorious; but, as he approaches the close of his life, it acquires a brighter lustre, a deeper tenderness, and a mightier strength; like a man near the end of his race, and almost within reach of the goal, he seems to hasten forth with redoubled vigour, and to be "straitened till it be accomplished." His thoughts appear concentrated in the successful termination of his important work, and every power of active energy, or of passive submission, is called into full exercise. Knowing that his time was at hand, he calls his disciples about him, and, in language of inimitable tenderness, gives them his last instructions, comforts them with promises, and prepares them for the trial which they, as well as he, had to undergo. This office of love to them being done, he prepares for the last solemn scene of his life,—his painful suffering and bitter agony,—and, to teach us where to fly in trouble, addresses himself in earnest prayer to the Father: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee."

On this critical moment, the moment upon which salvation seems to be tremblingly suspended, and the issue of which absorbed all the attention of attendant angels, we would fix your thoughts. If the angel on the morning of the resurrection said to the disciples, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," we would say, "Come, see the place where your Lord died;" come and contemplate the occurrences of an hour the most signal in the annals both of time and eternity; an hour marked with strange events, accomplished by strange means, distinguished by the union of wide extremes, in which heaven, earth, and hell took their respective parts, and from which will be drawn our highest comforts, or our deepest woes, through eternity.

We have said that this hour was marked by the union of wide extremes, by strange contrasts, and wondrous results: this will appear if we consider it,

I. As the hour of the deepest humiliation, and yet of transcendent glory.

The Son of God was humbled by taking our nature upon him, by living in obscurity, and by the poverty and reproaches which he endured; but all these were nothing compared with the humiliations of this hour. He was prostrate in the garden, arrested by a rude mob, arraigned as a criminal, buffeted, crowned with thorns, spit upon, scourged, hung upon a cross. How deep a humiliation crucifixion would appear to a Jew, will appear from this circumstance,—their own law had decided, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." How deep a humiliation it was in the estimation of a Roman may be learned from the fact, that Cicero, in his oration against Verres, urges it as one of the most solemn charges against that governor, that unawed by the majesty of the Roman commonwealth, he had nailed a

Roman citizen to the cross. Yet thus was Christ humbled in the presence of both Jews and Romans. "He humbled himself, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Yet, though in this hour we see his humiliation completed, it was nevertheless to him an hour of his glory. Sense saw nothing but clouds, the darkest clouds of shame, gathering around him: faith beholds those clouds gilded with heavenly splendour, and his glory rising with his deepening humiliation.

The highest virtues were displayed in that hour: fortitude, unshrinking fortitude. He felt more than man ever felt; yet he drank the cup. Meekness: "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter: and as a sheep is dumb before the shearer, so he opened not his mouth." Submission: With legions of angels at his command, he submitted thus to suffer and die, in compliance with his Father's will. Forgiveness: For his murderers he prayed, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Filial tenderness: Looking upon the beloved disciple, he said, in reference to his mother, "Behold thy mother." St. John knew his Lord's meaning; and from that time took her to his own home. Above all, love: We read of love stronger than death; it was here displayed: love to souls stronger than the feeling of self preservation; stronger than his sense of pain and of shame; stronger than death, even the death of the cross.

Nor were these the only glories which illuminated the dark humiliation of that hour: he was glorified by God. As there were miracles at his birth, at his baptism, in his ministry, so there were miracles in his death. As on mount Tabor he received glory and honour, so on mount Calvary. Why the darkness? The heavens were clothed in mourning for him. Why the earthquake? That even the centurion might confess, "Surely this man was the Son of God." Why the veil of the temple rent? To show that he was opening the new and living way to God. Why do the dead burst their graves? To show that life springs from his death; life to the soul, life to the world, life to the body. O signal hour, never to be forgotten! May it ever be inscribed upon our hearts, and may we know what it is to be crucified with Christ; to be weak and to be strong, to die and to live with him. By his cross we die unto the world, and by the Divine power which he displayed, even in his weakness, we may "live unto God."

The hour we are contemplating was marked,

II. With the greatest of human crimes, and the most affecting displays of the Divine mercy.

Jesus made his appearance in a wicked age; among other reasons, perhaps, for this,—to show that his mercy stoops to the most wicked of men, and that the worst may find mercy. The whole history of Christ, indeed, is a history of the obduracy and depravity of the Jews; but in the hour we are contemplating, every evil that characterized them appears under its greatest aggravations. Is hatred of goodness a crime? Why was Christ hated, but for the reproving purity of his life? His life, his words were standing rebukes to their hypocrisy; and instead of being corrected by reproof, they gnashed their teeth in hatred of the reprover. Is resistance to the authority of Heaven a crime? All the day long he stretched out his hands to them, and they rejected the Divinely-authenticated message, and murdered the Mes-

senger. Is opposition to the evidence of truth a crime? Not even the miracles of Christ convinced them: they blindly resolved on unbelief; their hearts were not even touched with the darkened heavens and the trembling earth; nay, not even the glorious and well-established fact of his resurrection convinced them. Is ingratitude a crime? Here behold it in its blackest robe. What return did he deserve who healed their sick and cured their blind? He who gave joy to afflicted families? He who went about doing good; who spent his days in labour, and his nights in prayer? Was a crown of thorns, a cross, a fit return? Are injustice and cruelty crimes? Then were they guilty: they arrested by their menaces the fair course of impartial justice; and when Pilate would have acquitted him, they forced the reluctant judge to condemn. He was denied even the pity which misery seldom fails to inspire; they aggravated his sufferings, and insulted him in the agonies of death.

Great God! why were these crimes suffered, but for the display of thy own grace, and to encourage sinful men to hope in thee to the end of time? That hour, so signalized by the crimes of man, was not less distinguished by the mercy of God. The heavens were astonished; but "the stars in their courses" did not, as of old, "fight against" the perpetrators of the horrid tragedy. The earth quaked; but it did not swallow them up, as it did Korah and his company. They were spared, and spared to be the subjects of a grace rich and infinite as its Author. The sufferer whom they hurried to Cavalry was then bearing the punishment of their sins in his own sacred body. He whom they stretched upon the cross was the atoning Lamb then laid upon that rude altar. The blood which they drew off by slow and cruel torments was then flowing to wash away the guilt even of their sins; and to sprinkle the mercy seat, to give their prayers acceptance. Yes, so it was. A fountain was opened in that moment for sin and uncleanness; opened for them, and for all; and after his resurrection they were invited to it. The Lord directed that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. As if he had said, "Let the first offer be made to them. Tell them I forgive their injustice and cruel wrongs. I forget the purple robe; the mock sceptre; the crown of thorns; all their insults, and all their ingratitude; and that I am 'exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel.' Bid them look unto me, whom they have pierced; and assure them that they shall not look in vain." What a display of mercy was here! and mercy, too, that reaches to us. Our sins had their share in effecting these sufferings. It was our load that pressed the blameless victim. But for that, all the external sufferings inflicted by the Jews would have been light. We are all among the murderers of Jesus. Yet the blood flowed for us.

In this singular hour of which the text speaks, we behold,

III. Wicked men and the ever-blessed God accomplishing opposite and contrary purposes.

The intention of the Jews was sufficiently obvious. It was to destroy Christ and his religion together. "If we put him to death," they reasoned, "we prove that he is not the Messiah; and the people cannot then believe in him. With him, his doctrine and his followers will perish also." Thus "they took counsel together against the Lord,

and against his Christ." In part they accomplished their purpose, and seemed fully to have accomplished it. They did put him to death; his disciples forsook him; and some gave up all hope, and went to their own homes. Doubtless, the priests and elders went from the cross congratulating themselves on the success of their attempt against his life and religion. Ah the blindness of man! The counsel of the Lord only standeth sure. "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Christ, it is true, was put to death by wicked men; but in this they only accomplished "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Paradoxical as it may appear, their success was their failure; and the fulfilment of their purpose its frustration. They indeed conceived that they had disproved his claims to the Messiahship by killing him; but of the truth of these claims his death was one of the strongest evidences. It accomplished the prophecies, and fulfilled the types. In that hour the typical history of Isaac was realized: the Father offered his Son, his only Son. The prospective application of the passover was then seen. The sprinkling of a nobler blood than that which was shed in Egypt arrested the stroke of the destroying angel of justice. He was the true scape-goat, who bore the transfer of our sins. All that was taught by the sin-offerings of the law was then explained; for "he who knew no sin was then made a sin-offering for us." Nor was his death only the fulfilment of types. It also fulfilled prophecies. It proved him to be the Messiah of Isaiah, who "was despised and rejected of men; who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;" who "was taken from prison and from judgment;" whom it pleased the Father to "bruise;" and who made his grave with the wicked and the rich. It proved him to be the Messiah of David, who should cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—the Messiah of Daniel, of whom it was said, that he should be "cut off, but not for himself," that he might "make reconciliation for iniquity;"—the Messiah of Zechariah, who was to be the "Fellow of Jehovah," against whom his "sword" should "awake." Thus was the hour of their triumph the hour of their confusion.

They expected, too, to maintain the honour of their law, against him who, as they conceived, proposed to destroy it; but by the very means of his death that law was abrogated. Till that moment the institutions of Moses had an efficacy; but then they became a dead letter. They had answered their purpose; they had served to "bring in a better hope;" and when that was come, in the moment that Christ said, "It is finished," the shadowy dispensation passed away for ever, like the clouds of the morning.

They hoped to destroy both Christ and his religion together. Vain hope! Had he not died, he could not have risen again. They knew not that his atoning death was the rock on which he would build his Church; and that the preaching of the cross would shake down both the temporary system of Moses, and the false religions of the whole earth. Thus God made the wrath of man to praise him; and thus, in this mysterious hour, did he accomplish his purposes of grace by their purposes of malice and wickedness.

The hour of which Jesus spoke, when he lifted up his eyes, and said, "Father, the hour is come," was,

IV. The hour of the triumph and overthrow of hell.

On the entrance of Christ upon his ministry he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. On that occasion the tempter was foiled ; but the evangelist adds, "He departed from him for a season." And it was but for a season. He retreated but to rally his forces, to mature his plans, and to commence the attack with a force equal to the mighty Antagonist he hoped to overthrow. Busy as he was in opposing and rendering Christ's ministry unsuccessful, he seems to have put forth all his strength in the hour we are contemplating. The assault began in the garden. Then was "the hour and the power of darkness." Mysterious as the transactions of that hour are, we cannot enter into all the particulars of the struggle which produced the agony and bloody sweat. A veil is drawn over the solemn scene. But it was the "hour and power of darkness;" and thus we learn that the malice of the devil had its share in producing those deep sorrows of the soul which required to be counteracted by the ministry of an angel, that the fainting victim might have strength for his remaining sufferings. See the same agency in the treachery of a disciple. The same foul spirit entered into Judas, and Christ was wounded in the house of his friends. The ferocity of the Jewish rabble, and the malice of the elders, bear indications plain enough of the infernal influence under which they acted. In this struggle the victor seemed to be vanquished. Man thought him conquered ; and hell thought him conquered. They both, therefore triumphed ; and with apparent reason. He who professed to be the Son of God hung a pallid corpse upon the tree. The tyrant Death triumphed over him who declared himself to be "the resurrection and the life." Never had he directed his dart against so noble a victim. Triumphantly he surrendered him to the grave whose dominion he had disturbed, and whose right he had invaded, by the resurrection of Lazarus. Now the grave had its victory, and folded him under its dark dominion. Nor were these the only triumphs of Satan. He triumphed over the Church. The disciples were dispersed, and hope was gone. The Shepherd was smitten, and the sheep were scattered. "Where now," it might be said, "is the promise, 'Upon this rock I will build my Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?'"

But this very hour of triumph was hell's overthrow. Christ foresaw this. Approaching this hour, he rejoiced in spirit, and said, "Now is the judgment of this world ; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." In that hour these words were accomplished : "He *gave* his life a ransom for many." He *gave* it ; it was not taken away. Here was the mistake of both men and devils. He gave his life a ransom ; he paid a price to justice, that he might obtain power to rescue men out of the snare of the devil. He was hung upon the cross ; but it was "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me." Yes ; the arm which was extended on the cross was extended there, that it might shake down the kingdom of Satan. The head that bowed as he gave up the ghost, was bowed that it might wear crowns of victory, won from the destroyer. He suffered the stroke of death, only to rob the monster of his sting ; and he sunk into the grave only to seize the key of its power, to open the gloomy realms, and call forth the prisoners

to everlasting life. And the triumph over the Church was but temporary. The disciples were scattered only to be gathered again; discouraged, only to be emboldened; driven back, only to be rallied at the sign of their victorious Lord rising from the grave. See them marshalled in holy combat against the kingdom of Satan, and made his witnesses to the ends of the earth. Hail, glorious Conqueror! may Satan every day feel the power thou didst thus acquire, in this hour of weakness and suffering, in the overthrow of his kingdom in all the world!

V. This hour stands distinguished from every other, as a point of time standing between the eternity of the past and the future, and related to each in a manner which marks no other from the beginning to the end of the world.

From eternity it was regarded by God. His plans of creation, providence, and grace were all arranged with respect to it. From before the foundation of the world it was appointed in the Divine mind. Angels looked forward to it with the deepest interest. The law was given by the disposition of angels, and types were set up, all with reference to it. When time began, they watched the preparations for the full development of the scheme of redemption. To it the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Job, and other holy men of old, looked with intense feeling. The prophets inquired diligently into the import of their own predictions, "searching what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The saints who died before the coming of Christ looked forward to his death. The events of that hour confirmed their title to endless bliss. They were all saved only in anticipation of his sacrifice. Through time, and the eternity which follows, there will be a constant looking back upon this hour. The Saviour looks back upon his sorrows. He remembers what it cost him to redeem; and he will not therefore hastily destroy. He is unwilling to lose the dear purchase of his blood. Penitents look back to that hour, and hope for pardon, holiness, and eternal life. Saints look back upon it; and it fires their love, and kindles their joys. In heaven the glorified spirits of believers will for ever look back upon it, and exclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive glory, and riches, and honour, and blessing."

This eventful hour must surely be fruitful of practical instruction. It suggests,

1. The infinite evil of sin.

What mind of man or angel can fully estimate its malignity, when it could only be expiated by the indescribable sufferings and the death of the incarnate Son of God?

2. Motives of the strongest hope.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" We cannot expect too much from the God of all grace, if we only labour, in the way of his own appointment, to secure the blessings for which we hope and pray.

3. Motives of love and obedience.

How can we sufficiently love Him who has shown all this love to us?

How entire ought to be our obedience! how strenuous our efforts to promote his glory, by the spread of his truth, and the assertion and maintenance of his rights!

4. Motives of holy fear.

"Where much is given, much is also required." The guilt of trampling upon the blood of the Son of God is guilt of no ordinary magnitude; and that fearful guilt is incurred by all who live and die in the neglect of the salvation of which he is the author.

SERMON XCII.—*The Unspeakable Gift.*

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," 2 Cor. ix, 15.

THE occasion on which these words were uttered is interesting, as exhibiting the generous and compassionate character of the Gospel, and its benevolent influence on the hearts of men. The saints in Judea had fallen into great poverty and distress. St. Paul pleaded their cause in various Gentile Churches, and urged collections for them: nor had he been unsuccessful; they had come forward cheerfully and liberally; and he urges their example on the Corinthians, not doubting but that among them also there would be an equal manifestation of the kind and charitable feelings which Christianity inspires. This, perhaps, was the very first collection on so large a scale ever made in the world; made among Gentiles, too, and for Jews, whom they both despised and hated. It presented a fine picture of that tenderness and enlargement of heart which could only be inspired by a religion of Divine charity; that sympathy which binds to each other men the most distant as children of the same Parent, and subjects of the same redeeming grace. No wonder the apostle rose into transport when he contemplated this, and so many other happy effects diffused by the Gospel throughout society, so far as it was allowed to spread its influence. In his usual rapid course of thought he traces the blessings up to their first source,—the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, and devoutly exclaims, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." The doctrine then is, that by the gift of Christ, blessings, unspeakable blessings, more than can be related or declared, have been bestowed upon mankind. This doctrine I propose,

I. To illustrate.

II. To improve.

I. I have to illustrate this interesting doctrine.

It would be easy to present you with a large enumeration of the blessings which have flowed down to us, which have been put within our reach, or have come actually into our possession by the gift of Christ; and, tracing all of them into their effects and consequences both in time and eternity, to call you to acknowledge how truly the gift in which they all originated may be described as unspeakable. But this would present too wide a scope; and I shall therefore content myself with selecting a few instances which may serve to impress the mind with the importance of the subject.

1. By the gift of Christ we receive the gift of religious truth.

In religion man is deeply interested : error on this subject affects both his present peace and his future salvation ; to this, therefore, the minds of men have been turned in all ages, but, as facts demonstrate, with endless fluctuations. The great variety of opinions which prevailed proves the interest they took in the subject ; and the differences which existed among them proved their want of light and direction. We, indeed, differ now ; but, if we are honest, our differences only relate to circumstantials : they differed on points that were essential. Nor was it possible for a man to lay even the foundations of love and hope ; there was no agreement either as to morals, or the method of forgiveness, or a future state. But what man could not reach, Divine mercy has supplied : forth from the cloud of the Divine presence come the tables of stone, in which all the principles of love and duty are inscribed by the finger of God himself. The Son of God appears incarnate, brightens that awful letter into its still more expressive and searching spirit, then shows the authorized atonement in his own sufferings and death ; displays the abounding grace of God in his promises, and, as to the future, rises from the dead in his might, throws back the veil which had hid the glories and terrors of another world, and pours upon the present time the clear light of eternity. If you would conceive more fully the value of this blessing, think of the anxieties as to the truth from which the mighty demonstrations of the Gospel save us ; think of the impressive fact, that every one of us knows that we may obtain pardon and peace, and that a light shines upon our path, which if it be not our own fault, shall dissipate the gloom of death, and lead us up to the very gate of eternal life. Think on this, and say whether the gift from whose blessed inspiration and teaching all this revelation emanates, be not indeed unspeakable ?

2. By the gift of Christ, and as an immediate consequence of religious doctrine, we receive the gift of conscience.

If any of you think this a topic too minute and subordinate to be placed in this enumeration, bear with me while I endeavour to show you its unspeakable value. It is in conscience that religion is placed as its first principle and basis ; it has respect to a Divine rule by which our actions and character are determined as right or wrong ; and it includes a sense of guilt and fear of the future, or a sweet and tranquil assurance of the Divine favour : it is thus an evil or a good conscience. But for conscience, there would be no check to vice ; but for conscience, there would be no pleasure in virtue ; but for the uneasiness and alarms created by its inward reproofs, no one would ever turn to God ; but for its sweet and powerful motives, there would be no cheerfulness in obedience. But we owe all this to the gift of Christ. Where there is no truth, there is no conscience ; men seem asleep ; in their trespasses and sins they are dead ; and society all around becomes corrupt. Such was the state of the pagan world. But the awful rule is now revealed : on the one hand the fearful consequences of offence are shown, and, on the other, the sprinkling of the conscience by the blood of Christ, and the power and value of obedience. Dwell now on the consequences till you lose yourselves in their extent, and own that gift to be indeed unspeakable which gave a conscience to man. See them in the private conscience of all

enlightened individuals. The distinctions between right and wrong are kept broad and visible by conscience. It restrains in all; and when awakened fully by the convincing Spirit, it is that which turns you, guilty wanderers, like the prodigal in the parable, with penitence to the house of your Father: your sins are forgiven by him, and your conscience is at rest. And to preserve this peace within, to avoid the anguish before so severely felt, the rule is delicately and scrupulously applied, and you only live to please God, and to receive the testimony that you are accepted of him. Thoughts, words, and actions all come under the rule. It is a Christian conscience which makes a Christian man, and adorns his character with the venerableness of rectitude, and the softness of charity.

And this gift to a nation creates a public conscience. This is, indeed, very imperfect; but it grows with the influence of Christianity. All that there is of public virtue in Christian nations above heathen nations is the result of it. This it is which shall at last purify every nation; it shall go on wrestling with wrong, tyranny, and oppression, the vices of the mind, and the vices of the animal nature, till a whole world, hallowed to God, shall proclaim the gift to be unspeakable.

3. By the gift of Christ we receive the gift of righteousness by faith.

This has in part been anticipated; but it claims a more particular consideration, in illustration of the subject before us. It is only by Christ that we come to know the fact, that the God whom we have offended is placable, and that it is in his gracious purpose to forgive: where else should we learn it? If we go to nature, that shows his severity as well as his goodness; if to his moral government, repentance removes not the consequences of transgression. But here the glorious fact comes forth for which prophecy prepared the world, and which was confirmed by the most splendid miracles, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; and if any one now inquires of you whether, under the moral government of God, sin may be forgiven, you may say with John the Baptist, and put all doubt to flight, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." My brethren, can we express, then, the consequences in this particular respect, of the gift of Christ? Can we tell the value of this hope when it breaks upon the darkness of a self-condemned and alarmed spirit? Can we sufficiently conceive of the mercy and wisdom of that method of pardon which brings men from penances and pilgrimages, painful inflictions and tortures, the tormenting tyranny of superstitious men, and the hopeless efforts for self-deliverance prescribed by pharisaic men; and reveals this righteousness of faith, making simple trust and acceptance the only condition laid upon an humbled and penitent spirit? Can we sufficiently express that grace of our Lord Jesus which, when this great change in our condition has taken place, leaves us not in doubt of it, but sends the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to assure our consciences of pardon, and to bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God? And if we cannot in words express, or in thought adequately conceive, these blessings, nor the joy of filial confidence, the calm and humble assurance with which a pardoned and accepted man thinks of God, and goes up to his throne of mercy; nor the glory of that heavenly inheritance to which the justification of man before God gives the sure title, indefeasible by any thing save our own

apostasy ; then how devoutly, and with what emphasis, may we join the apostle and say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift !"

4. By the gift of Christ a new order of afflictions were opened in the hearts of men.

I know that good affections were always the result of true religion under former dispensations, but they were strengthened by the coming of Christ ; and, as to the world at large, it knew them not, and the spirit and influence of their religions were altogether opposed to them. See this illustrated in the love of God, as excited by his creating goodness and providential care ; his pitying and redeeming mercy ; his manifestations of himself under the character of a father, receiving his repentant offspring, forgiving their disobedience, and upbraiding them not ; the love of man, on the new and enlarged principles of a common brotherhood, and a common redemption ; zeal for the happiness of all men, excited and fed by views of their spiritual interests, and relations to an eternal world ; forgiveness of all injuries, grounded on a sense of the greatness of our own sins against God, and the freedom of his forgiving love to ourselves ; sympathy and compassion to all in trouble, unbounded by name or country ; that very affection which, created in these Gentile Churches, made them on this occasion contribute to the relief of the poor saints in Judca ; that which originated the noble precept, "Do good unto all men ;" a sympathy fed by the love of that Christ whose grace was such, that "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich : " and finally, a charity, which, we may be bold to say, was never conceived of even by the best and wisest heathen, and which, even had they conceived it, they had no means of attaining ; that charity which suffereth long and is kind ; which envieth not ; which thinketh no evil ; which believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. True it is, that you will find many hearts but partially transformed into the image of these sweet and beautiful affections, and much in society contrary and opposed to them : this only proves, however, the stubbornness of the matter which our religion has to melt and cast into its own mould ; the earthliness of the material which, by its own ethereal fire, it has to purify and transform. The value of the gift is not diminished by the fault of man. Over myriads of hearts has it shed this sanctifying and softening influence ; and its triumphs in society, though far from being complete, are yet eminent and glorious. These are the affections which give the poor an interest in the feelings of the rich ; which have created the numerous public charities of the day, some of which are even charities for the world : these are the charities which subdue secret resentments, dispose the heart to friendship, and make man kind and forbearing ; which, binding together the domestic charities, create for us homes of peace and love ; and from one of them,—the love of the brethren, springs that interesting fellowship of the faithful, the communion of saints, which unites in one the children of God that are scattered abroad, and presents the fairest type on earth of the society and the harmony of heaven. In this respect, also, the gift is unspeakable.

5. By the gift of Christ we receive the privilege of public worship.

In all ages has worship been practised ; but the characters of Christian worship are peculiar to itself, and it stands in its own majestic

simplicity, the most wonderful and impressive visible instance of the grace of God to man. It is not the worship of lords many and gods many, but of one God and Father of all, invested with immense majesty, and tenderest condescension. It recognizes the special manifestation of God in particular places, but gives this an exposition suited to the nature of so glorious a Being whose presence is infinite; so that wherever he records his name, and his people assemble, there he comes that he may bless them. It appeals to no unmeaning principle of blind superstition; but, all light and truth, it makes knowledge the source of its devotion; and, having first opened the volume of revelation, calls upon men to pray and sing with the spirit and with the understanding also. It annihilates all distinctions in the presence of God, so that pride is hidden from man in this perfect equality before the great Object of his worship; and rich and poor are alike called to rejoice, the one because he is brought low, the other because he is exalted. Pride is thus forbidden the one, and despair the other. It is the voice of invitation in public places, calling upon all to remember, and fear, and turn to the Lord. To the penitent it presents the mercy seat, the throne of grace, the extended sceptre; to a devout and transforming contemplation it unveils the Divine glories; and to the troubled spirit it offers help and comfort, for "God is known in" the palaces of the Church "for a refuge." It connects these outward and less glorious scenes with the sublime scenes of heaven itself. Every thing in the worship appointed for earth is connected with a wonderful arrangement: there is the great High Priest in the holiest of all; there the mercy seat sprinkled with the blood of atonement; and there the prayers of saints are presented, with the intercession of Jesus. Our praises on earth are thus connected with the far-echoing sounds of grateful joy rising from the Church triumphant, and our solemn silence with the deeper awe of the prostrate and worshipping seraphim. It presents a sweet picture of the better world which is prepared for them that love God. What are our Sabbaths but emblems of that rest? that holy Sabbath keeping which remaineth for the people of God after life's toilsome work is ended? What our assemblies, but shadows of that general assembly, and Church of the first-born, to which Christianity calls us? What our worship, but a faint resemblance of that eternal application of the intellect and heart to the ever unfolding mysteries, the ever brightening glories, of the Godhead?

Now let us view the effects and consequences of worship, and then ask whether the gift which bestows them is not indeed unspeakable. Consider the impression which is thus made even on society, and the fear of God which is thus maintained there; the powerful call from debasing allurements and worldly thoughts to the things which belong to our peace; the souls which are constantly awaking, under the influences of these Divine institutions, from the deathly slumbers of sin and worldliness, and rising into a new and higher order of feelings and principles. Conceive of the pardons which are distributed among the humbled publicans who stand smiting on their breasts, but go down to their houses justified; of the holy communings with God enjoyed in his sanctuaries; of the glowing anticipations of heaven there felt. See these effects silently working in the peace and order of Christian families; and, among nations where the worship of God is set up,

restraining crime, mitigating punishment, and promoting a general prosperity. And, above all, consider how, in every place, generation after generation are trained up on earth for the blessings of the heavenly world, and that they pass in succession from these outward courts to that most holy place only separated from us by the curtain of a frail mortality; and you will feel that, though all these general thoughts may easily be arranged before our minds, yet that we can no more express the innumerable benefits which are flowing secretly and silently, but constantly and certainly, from the establishment of this hallowed worship in our land, than we can trace the silent but mighty influence of the spring which penetrates every root, clothes the naked tree with budding foliage, turns the barren soil into a garden, and spreads abroad infinitely more life and loveliness than the eye can measure or the tongue express.

II. If, then, we have shown you that the gift of Christ is, indeed, unspeakable, by only a general glance at the blessings which we derive from it, what improvement should we make of the subject thus set before us?

I would suggest to you three thoughts: one a very solemn one; the second encouraging; and the third full of hope and joy.

1. The serious and searching consideration which I would, in the first place, suggest, is, that this unspeakable gift, with all its resulting blessings, may have been offered to us in vain.

God deals with man, it is true, in the way of grace, nay, of attraction and powerful influence; but still he deals with him as a reasonable and accountable creature: he makes the offer, but you may refuse it. Yes, the love of the world may hold its place in the heart, the indifference of an unawakened spirit may still keep you in the bondage of vice, and so you may reject this truth, and walk in darkness, or only following some flitting and misleading vapour; and this conscience, so often touched and awakened, may be lulled by the opiates which a carnal heart supplies, deceived by promises of future amendment, or hardened to utter unfeelingness by direct and obstinate resistance. This offered grace of pardon may be slighted till offended mercy withdraw the boon; and though you knock at the door, he from within shall answer you, and say, "Depart, I know you not." For these kind affections you may have no heart, and therefore you may see in them no beauty; and the worship of God may lose its charm. You may forget the guides of your youth, who taught you thus to come up to the house of God; or you may continue to practise it without thought, till you evaporate it into a dry and sapless formality, and so pass from these courts utterly unprepared for judgment and eternity: and when this is the case, remember that all your sin is aggravated, and the measure of the mercies you have slighted becomes the measure of your guilt.

2. The second thought is encouraging.

True, I may address some who may hitherto have been increasing this aggravated guilt. You have had no love for this saving truth. Many are the gracious checks and admonitions of the good Spirit which you have resisted; your long-suffering Lord may say, "All the day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people;" but such is his grace, that he stretches them out still: all the blessings which flow from the unspeakable gift are again offered you;

this present ordinance is a new proof that he waits your return. O break from the world; exercise the reason of men, and act on your own convictions! Time flies; death urges; heaven invites; blessings which pass not only utterance, but conception, are offered you; all things are ready. In the unspeakable gift see the love of God; his readiness to save.

3. If the gift be unspeakable, from the very fulness and variety of its blessings, then have we presented to us the noblest view of the true life of a Christian.

In every other form of religion, or in those framed out of a spiritless and corrupted form of the true religion, we soon see all that they can give; the spring is soon dry, or rather, it never flows but in the imagination of the deluded votary. But here, the fulness is inexhaustible, and spreads innumerable blessings before us in time and eternity. Now, the Scriptural rule is, "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance;" that is, to him that makes use of what he hath; to him who maintains his love for heavenly wisdom and truth; to him who steadily and constantly acts upon his convictions, thus having his eye single; to him who continually lives by faith in the great atonement; to him who follows after holiness in all its branches, keeping and cultivating his heart with all diligence, and calling the graces implanted in him into habitual use; to him who is deeply and constantly sensible that his whole strength is in God, and that all the means of grace, whether private or public, as keeping his intercourse with heaven always open, are essential to his improvement and safety;—to him that thus uses the gift shall be given, so that he shall have abundance. Yes, that light shall shed a brighter radiance on his intellect, and ever feed the hallowed, elevated musings of his spirit. The exercised conscience, the discerning mind, will try the things that differ; and, more accurately perceiving the right, will walk in a path of light and evidence; a perfected faith in Christ's atonement and intercession will banish all fear, and fill the mind with the joys of assured salvation; love will exert all its victorious influence; all things base and low will be consumed in the sacred fire; every Christian temper will be matured; the soul will thus dwell in God, and God in the soul, as in a temple built, and beautified and adorned by himself. How joyful then will be the approaches of the soul to God in worship! With what freedom from distraction shall we then draw near to him! How powerful will be our faith! how prevalent our prayers! "Surely," shall we then say, as we tread his courts, "surely this is none other than the house of God, this is none other than the gate of heaven." "Blessed," we shall say, "are they that dwell in thy house; they shall still be praising thee." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" You shall thus have abundance; and, tracing to their source all the blessings you enjoy, all the yet greater blessings you hope for, in time your song shall be, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift;" and gratitude for an infinite good spreading itself through the countless ages of eternity, shall still prompt the adoring exclamation, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

SERMON XCIII.—*The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ.*

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv, 6.

AMONG inquirers after religious truth, it is easy to distinguish two classes. One class there is who entirely disregard the manifestation of the glory of God—the Divine perfections, will, and purposes,—in the face of Jesus Christ. They turn to nature, and there collect notices of God. They refer to the spiritual powers and faculties of their own minds, and endeavour to complete what is still wanting in the intimations of God which they find in the natural world. They refer to the moral feelings of their own hearts, and observe what is best adapted to man in his social and relative capacity; and with these collections of opinions and facts, they construct their religious and moral system. But though they do not advert to the manifestation of God by Christ, mentioned in the text, they are indebted to it for all that is good in their system; and what is false and defective arises from their wicked and contemptuous rejection of it.

There is another class of a superior character. They acknowledge that God hath spoken to us by his Son; and that his glory shines from the face,—the person, work, and offices—of our Lord; but they seem not always to have pursued this subject to its full extent. They allow that a glory shines from the face of Jesus Christ upon what are called the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; but they seem to fancy that there is a great body of religious truth which has been brought to light, or is capable of being brought to light, by other means, and in which they may expatiate without the aids of the Christian revelation. They turn for illumination, not to “the face of Christ,” not to the mirror of the Christian system, but to the dim and unsteady reflections of human philosophy.

It was not under this partial and limited view that the Apostle Paul considered the knowledge of Christ. To him it had an excellency for which he suffered the loss of all things, and left him nothing to wish or hope beside. We never hear him making distinctions between natural religion and revealed religion. We never perceive in him an indication of dependence on his own great and cultivated powers, to give him, on any subject of moral or religious truth, views more ample, or more deep than were afforded by the doctrines he was inspired to teach. From all the lesser lights in the firmament he turned to one of unutterable and undecaying splendour. He saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and it was enough. He saw light no where else; and the hemisphere it illuminated was too large even for the march of his mighty and majestic mind.

This was the constant subject of his own thanksgivings; and for this mercy,—the greatest that human beings could receive—he summoned the primitive Churches to bring their thanksgivings also. “Ye were once darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord.” The text was intended to excite the same emotion of grateful love. It reminds us, as well as the Corinthians, of what we owe to the Gospel; and, while it calls for our gratitude, the terms in which it is expressed lay down an

important and profitable doctrine. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ."

We direct your attention to the two great points of instruction contained in the text.

I. That the knowledge of the glory of God, his perfections and purposes, is given to us in the face of Jesus Christ.

II. That the means by which this knowledge is attained by men is the shining of God into their hearts.

I. We shall understand the meaning of the expression, "face of Jesus Christ," if we advert to the preceding chapter.

Here the apostle speaks of the shining of the face of Moses, after he came down from the mount; and teaches us that this was symbolical. The "glory" was the type of that heavenly doctrine, those discoveries of the mercy of God in Christ, which the law contained. The "veil" was the type of the shadows and forms by which it was concealed. It was not so concealed, but that some rays broke forth on the faithful. They were also found looking through the veil, or lifting it up, that they might discover something of the Divine purposes. These were the "wondrous things" which David desired to see; and he prayed that God would open his eyes to behold them. They would have been seen by all the Jews, had they not put the veil of prejudice upon their hearts, and thus rendered them dark and blind. But no veil is over the face of Christ. Truth and grace shine forth in him with unsuppressed splendour; and when the veil is taken away from the heart, when God shines into it, then we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord.

This is the meaning of the allusion; but the whole, stripped of its figurative dress, is embodied in this most important doctrine, that in Christ God hath made a revelation of his own glory, and in Christ alone. From henceforward we are not to look for the knowledge of the glory of God on the dull and shivered mirrors of human intelligence. That knowledge is given to us in the "face," the person, work, and offices, of Jesus Christ.

1. The natural perfections of God, those profound and overwhelming glories of his nature, are displayed in him.

If we consider them as announced in Scripture; if there God is said to be immortal, eternal, infinite in knowledge, boundless in his presence, and immutable in his nature; all these attributes are affirmed of our Saviour Christ. He stands before us arrayed in all their pomp, the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person. But if we lose sight of the Scripture testimony, and go to the vast tablet of nature, to collect from its innumerable inscriptions, that He who made all things must be before all things; that He on whom all things depend must himself be independent; that He who could create out of nothing must be absolutely God; that He who could pour forth this profusion of grandeur and glory must have infinite perfections, and riches of power, wisdom, and goodness; even when we look upon the face of nature, we look on the face of Jesus Christ. Others may neglect to consider the subject; but the Christian will not forget that all this stupendous fabric is the work of Christ himself. All things were made by the Son, and for him; and without him was not any thing

made that was made. The perfections, therefore, which nature proves to be in the Author of nature are the perfections of Jesus ; and arrayed in them he stands before us as the image of the invisible God, showing what God is, by what he himself, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, is ; and thus is the knowledge of the glory of God given us in the face of Jesus Christ.

2. The glory of God sometimes signifies his truth ; those right apprehensions concerning himself, and the relations, duties, and hopes of his creatures, on which all practical religion rests ; and this is a glory which shines in Jesus Christ.

It is in vain that we seek it any where but in him. It is a proposition not too bold,—it is one which admits of ample proof,—that there is no moral, no religious truth in the world, and none has ever been in it, which we do not owe to Jesus Christ. Is the law, the pure and holy law, under which all intelligent creatures are placed, a manifestation of the Divine glory ? It is manifested by Christ. He is the Creator of men and angels. By him were all things created, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers. From him they derived their being, and the law of their being ; the law which is holy, and just, and good. Has man become guilty ? Grace, as well as truth, came by Jesus Christ. The clearest discovery of grace was indeed made by him when he became incarnate ; but there has been no grace revealed to man in any age but by and through him. The first promise on which human hope rested, was the promise that he, “the Seed of the woman,” should “bruise the serpent’s head ;” and if we find successive and brighter displays of grace in the writings of the Old Testament, “to him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth shall receive the remission of sins.” They prophesied, says St. Peter, “of the grace which should come unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Here, then, is the glory of God in the truth and purity of the law, and in the kindness, grace, and mercy of the Gospel ; and both seen in the face of Jesus Christ. The law and the Gospel comprehend the whole of moral and religious truth ; and where do we find either beside ? Feeble reflections of both we find among the Gentiles ; but they are reflections from his original communications. Clearer discoveries are found in the Jewish records ; but they are the inspirations of his Spirit. A full discovery of both is made in the Scriptures of the New Testament ; but he brought personally from heaven the truth which they embody, and spoke it in the ears of the evangelists and apostles. Where else do we find it ? We repeat the question. Bring us the nation entirely cut off from these sources of information ; and where is the knowledge of God, of morals, of religion ? Bring your wisest sages, the profound reasoners, and investigators of truth ; and where are their discoveries ? They corrupt the truth which they have ; they darken the light that already shines ; but they discover nothing. No ; it is “God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, that hath shined into our hearts, to give the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” The whole body of truth is collected in him ; and every ray of light, wherever dispersed, however bent and turned, by whomsoever falsely claimed, in whatever school it has brightened the dark and perplexed page of human learning, has shined among men from the face of Jesus Christ.

3. To Jesus we owe the only complete manifestation of the moral attributes of God.

How important it is to know that he is holy, that he is just, and that he is good, is too obvious to need proof. These are the great foundations of religion. They are the foundations of all duty, of all trust, of all hope, of all salutary fear. But if I close my eyes on the knowledge of the glory of God, as it is manifested in him, all my views on these great subjects are obscure and perplexed. Do I seek elsewhere for indications of the unspotted holiness of God? I see, it is true, upon vice, visible marks of his displeasure; but I also see that righteousness affords no exemption from calamity. Do I look for justice? I see in some cases visitations of punishment; but in others long delay, or entire exemption. Do I look for goodness? I see an equal mixture and discordance. From the hand of the Ruler of the world I see both good and evil issue. Creatures are both happy and miserable: and if I please myself by reflecting that he giveth fruitful seasons; that he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing; I am appalled, and know not how to extenuate his character, when I perceive him marching through the earth in awakened wrath, scattering plagues and famines; and above all, I know not how to reconcile it to his compassion and tenderness, that every living thing should be subject, daily subject, to suffering and death. Such, without a revelation, would be our embarrassments; and perplexity on these subjects would throw a darkening and distressing shade over every part of religion and future hope.

But in Jesus the obscurity is removed. Inquire we if God is holy? Behold his image upon earth; and see the demonstration in the perfect purity of his life, and the spotlessness of his doctrine; a doctrine which binds every vagrant appetite, which seizes the thoughts and imaginations of the heart, and declares that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Inquire we as to his justice? See it in the sufferings of Christ in the garden and upon the cross. There it is demonstrated that God winks not at evil; there justice demands the utmost farthing; there it exacts its rigid satisfaction, nor permits weeping mercy itself to stretch out a hand of help, till it is made to appear to men and angels, to a universe of wondering and trembling intelligences that God is just when he justifieth the ungodly. And for love? "Herein is love,"—demonstration can go no higher; no obscurity shades the glorious manifestation,—"herein is love; not that we loved God," and therefore had no claim upon him, "but that he loved us," who loved not him, "and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Seek the demonstration where you will beside, all other proofs fade before this. Tell us not of the heavens spangled with beauty, to ennoble our dwelling place the earth. Tell us not of the earth with her circling seasons, pouring her stores at our feet; nor of any of these inferior and mixed expressions of the goodness and compassion of our God: for **HEREIN IS LOVE**. This is the manifestation of it which meets every desire; which surpasses all human hope and human worthiness. It is this that kindles the swelling bosom of the Church on earth; and it is this that will give rapture to the song ever new to all eternity. "**Herein is love;**" and love harmonized with justice, truth, and holiness.

4. In Jesus Christ alone we have a manifestation of the glory of God in the moral government of the world.

Those who are the most apt to disregard the consideration of the person and offices of Christ, as the key to all religious knowledge, must frequently fancy that the most effectual method of obtaining a knowledge of the Divine glories, is the careful study of the doctrine of providence; but of providence, whether as to individuals, to nations, or to the world at large, every view must be obscure and confused, which does not result from its connection with the work of Christ. If we look not on the glory of his face, we have seen that we have no adequate knowledge of the moral perfections of God, of holiness and truth, of justice, of goodness; we know not the existence of a redeeming scheme in which all of them unite and harmonize; and how then should we know the principles and intended results of his providential government? But in Christ the great reason of all providential arrangements is to be ascertained. There may be much difficulty in connecting every circumstance in our personal history with the design of God; and more still, as to nations; but the great principles of justice and grace run through the whole of them, and so often break the gloom as to explain the general tendency and direction. When I consider that I am redeemed by Christ, and that his great purpose is to save me, can I be at a loss to know why I am surrounded with blessings? They are to lead me to repentance. I know why I am disappointed and afflicted. It is that I may be corrected, and warned of the guilt and danger of rejecting him. Do I not see why I am not suffered to rest in the creature? It is,—and nothing but a knowledge of Christ can inform me of this great mercy,—that my soul may seek its true good and happiness in him.

Nations, too, are under a government which, if there be no respect to Christ, cannot be understood. They are dealt with both in judgment and mercy, with reference to religious considerations. To Christ is given all power both in heaven and in earth. Nations are in the hands of a Mediator. Hence his long-suffering with their sins. Hence his acceptance of repentance. “At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them,” Jer. xviii, 7–10. Hence it is that nations have their periods of religious visitation; and hence, too, the punishment which, as king, he inflicts upon them for their contempt of his truth, and their corruption of it; often followed by long periods of political disaster, and religious darkness. “The history of the world is the history of the Church;” and, could we accurately trace it, we should perceive how acts of grace and justice succeed each other, or are mingled; and that the whole is in proof of a government to which politicians have little respect,—the mediatorial government of Jesus Christ.

We may go on from nations to the world at large; and here most eminently the glory of God in his government of this lower world is

manifested by and in our Lord Jesus Christ. With respect to the future condition of our world, I have often wondered what are the views of mere politicians, of men who have no knowledge of, or respect to, the great redeeming plan of the Father, to be conducted by the Son, and the agency of the Holy Spirit. They have seen nations rise and fall, flourish and decay; science light her torch in every country, and successively burn it out. All is change in a circle; and the round of rise, and progress, and decay, wheels onward. On any principles, save those of our own revelation, this must be the case; for no where else is there a remedy for vice; and it is vice in all ages that has withered the strength, faded the glory, and laid prostrate the greatness of all nations. To them is presented no better prospect for our world, than a constant succession of such changes; and this indeed is indicated by a maxim of theirs founded on the past: "A nation is like the human body. It has its infancy, its youth, its manhood, and its old age." And surely this is melancholy enough; that our modern cities shall be in ruins; and the fields now covered with corn, and the valleys which rejoice and sing, shall present a scene of sterility, desolation, and silence; while, in some distant part of the world, new empires shall rise, only to give place to the wastes of time in their turn. Where shall we fly from these appalling scenes, but to the glory of God, his glorious purposes, in Jesus Christ? There another scene is unfolded. His plan has been obstructed, but not always. His Gospel shall be preached; its influence shall be felt; the principles of national decay shall be arrested. A glory is put upon every morally recovered nation; "and upon that glory there shall be a defence." Savages shall be reclaimed; the earth peopled; kingdoms shall rise under the hallowing influence of his religion; his moral conquests shall go on; and his peaceful kingdom shall be established, until all nations are blessed in him, and all nations call him blessed.

5. The glorious purpose of God, in the forgiveness of the penitent who believes, and in the sanctification and glorification of believers, is manifested to us in the face of Jesus Christ.

This to us all-important knowledge of the glory of God is most eminently and exclusively the revelation of Christ. Where else shall we go to seek it? Could any reasoning of our own minds furnish us with such conceptions of God's transcendent mercy? Does nature, with all her glories, teach us the doctrine of pardon? Can we infer, from providence that God will employ himself by his Holy Spirit to sanctify the soul of man, and dwell in it? Is there any source of information but Christ, that our bodies shall be raised again? that we shall meet in heaven? that in that unsuffering world our immortal natures shall take up their everlasting residence? Certainly not. It is Jesus who is set forth as the propitiation for our sins; it is Jesus who hath promised his Holy Spirit; it is Jesus who said, "I am the resurrection and the life;" Jesus, on whose lips of truth and kindness many a weeping Martha has hung, and heard him say, "Thy brother shall rise again." From Jesus only have we learned that, "whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

But by what means is all this knowledge of the glory of God to enter into our hearts, so as to produce all its moral and sanctifying effects there? This question we now proceed to answer. It is,

II. By the shining of God into the heart. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The doctrine taught us by the first part of the text is, that whatever glory shines from the face of Christ, and however this glory may be unveiled; yet, while the heart is dark, it derives no benefit from all this manifestation.

That darkened heart is our heart until God by special acts of his grace shines into it. The veil is upon it.

The love of sin veils the heart. This is the source of all error. Men "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." And "every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be made manifest."

A worldly spirit darkens the heart. Where that spirit is cherished and predominates, there is no taste for religious truth. In this state of mind words of truth fall upon the ear, and the doctrines of salvation are exhibited; but no serious attention to them is yielded. The man of the world has no leisure for the consideration of such subjects. Thus time runs on, and death too often arrests the unprepared spirit, which is hurried to its final account in a state of guilt and sin. A worldly man regards not the work of the Lord, neither considers the operation of his hands.

Sloth darkens the spirit. Why are we not seen at the posts of wisdom's door? Why are we not all attention in the house of God? Why do we not "search the Scriptures?" Why do we not breathe the ardours of our souls in our closets? Why do we not direct our hearts to God, and look for "the wisdom that cometh from above?" It is sloth that keeps us back; and yielding to this ignoble feeling, our hearts remain hard and cold.

A proud and self-sufficient spirit darkens the heart. We fancy that we are already wise and instructed. We are too proud to sit at the feet of Christ as disciples. We rather assume the air and character of masters. Or we think that we are righteous; and until we feel ourselves lost and undone, the veil will be on our hearts as to the glory which shines in the face of Jesus Christ.

God hath shone first upon us with feeble rays, and we have rejected the light and shut our eyes against it. Let us pray then for the pouring out of all this splendour; and open our hearts to admit the light. The admission of it will cost us pangs of sorrow; for the shining is on the heart; and it will give us to see and feel what the heart is. The humbling confession will then be extorted, "Behold, I am vile. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

The shining of this light will humble our pride. Like the psalmist we shall confess, "So foolish and ignorant was I, that I was even like a beast before thee." Yet when the docile spirit is wrought, discoveries the most delightful are made to the heart. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." The light will show us Christ, as our atoning Saviour, and as our powerful Advocate with God; it will inspire us with confidence in him, and then shall we be "filled with all joy and peace in believing, and abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Under this inspiration the soul is daily transformed, and fitted for heaven;

“Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place.”

We learn from this entire subject,

1. That if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

O tremble lest this should be your fearful state. These things are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. “The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way;” while the careless, the impenitent, the worldly, the unbelieving, will be for ever abandoned to their own blindness and folly, and to the bitter consequences of their sin.

2. There is no true light in the heart, but that which is accompanied with Divine life.

Your speculative knowledge, however proud you may be of it, is dark indeed. Do you know a God of holiness, and not tremble before him? of justice, and not fear his wrath against sin? Do you know a Saviour, and not believe in him, and love him? Impossible. You are still in darkness. Tell us not that you can name all the terms of theology, and estimate the correctness of creeds. Light in the head, and light in the heart, are distinct. If light were in your hearts, it would be otherwise with you than it is. You would be humble and spiritual, dead to sin, and alive to things Divine and holy.

3. Those that are in the light must take care to walk in it.

It is vouchsafed to us for the purpose of leading us to the attainment of all the salvation which is by Christ Jesus, and of regulating our whole spirit and conduct.

4. Have you so much light? I put it to you, whether you will not pity those who sit in darkness?

Such is the wretched state of the heathen, for whose instruction and salvation we are bound to pray and labour.

SERMON XCIV.—*Isaiah's Vision.*

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged,” *Isaiah vi, 1-7.*

God is invisible; yet in that heavenly world in which he has his special and eternal residence, he manifests himself in ineffable glory, dwelling in what the Scriptures call “the light which no man can approach unto.”

Of that heavenly world, the tabernacle and temple were splendid emblems; they were “patterns of heavenly things.” But why the

astonishing fact, that when sinful creatures erected a tent in the wilderness, and a temple, subsequently, at Jerusalem, the visible glory of God descended, taking possession of the place? God thus came down from heaven to earth, with all these impressive circumstances of visible majesty, to teach his creatures that he was awfully glorious, and fearful even in his praises; that even in his acts of grace his holiness is solemnly declared; and thus to show with what reverence and purity man ought to approach to him.

So when Isaiah was to be appointed to an office in which he was to fear God, and not the face of man, and which, to give it weight and authority, required an entire sanctity, a scene similar to that which had been displayed in the temple at its consecration, but greatly heightened and magnified, was disclosed to him in vision. The space of this visionary temple appears to have been far more ample than that of the one at Jerusalem; the throne was greatly elevated, it was "high, and lifted up;" the "train," the "skirts" (as in the margin) of the cloud of the Divine presence filled the whole place; instead of the carved representations of the cherubim of glory fixed on the mercy seat, the prophet beholds the cherubim themselves, living, and all ardour, activity, and adoration; they are not represented in the vision as the cherubim in the holiest of all, silently gazing on the glory of God and the mysteries of his covenant, but as hymning his praises, proclaiming his spotless purity, and declaring "the whole earth to be full of his glory." The prophet, beholding the wondrous scene, sinks oppressed and self-aborred, until a coal from the altar touched his lips, and he is thus sanctified to the service of God, and put among his ministers.

Such visions occur not now, because they have all been superseded by that eternally glorious manifestation displayed to all, and throughout all ages, by God in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself; but they are left on record for the continual instruction of men; they are scenes in God's temple, and ever present to the eye of devotion and faith; and to our faith and to our devotion, they must all be manifest, or we shall neither be his spiritual worshippers here on earth, nor admitted into his heavenly temple hereafter. You come here in acts of solemn worship, to seek God: turn aside, then, to see this great sight. Behold, in these temple scenes, both what the Lord your God is, and what he requires from you.

I. The first of these temple scenes presents to our view the majesty of God: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up."

One of the first and most important truths for us to learn is the absolute rule of God. The proud king of Babylon was banished from the society of men, and placed among the beasts of the earth, till he was brought to acknowledge "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men;" and the dispensations of God as to the world, whether of judgment or mercy, will never close until all shall feel and confess that he is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and that he shall reign for ever and ever. Mark, then, the fact as displayed in this temple scene: he hath dominion; he sitteth upon a throne; the Lord is King. He did not, when he had made the world, retire into the depths of his own Godhead, leaving it without notice and government; but as by him all things were made, so by him do all things still consist; all things are under his dominion and law.

The natural world is ruled by Him : he wheels its revolutions, and leads up its seasons ; he controls its mightiest and most restless elements ; whirlwinds and tempests are but his servants ; he sets bounds to the waters, and says to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." And the world of mankind is equally under his rule : he has written his laws both on tables of stone, and on fleshly tables of the heart ; he commands the obedience of men, visits them for their sins, and marches through the earth putting down one, and setting up another ; and who shall stay his hand, or say to him, What doest thou ? Nor is his kingdom confined to earth : it extends to heaven, and controls the highest order of beings there. So in the vision of these adoring seraphim : among other uses of their wings, "with twain they did fly ;" to denote their ready obedience ; and of these highest and most glorious ranks of created beings we may say, "These are all thy servants."

But mark the scenic circumstances. He sitteth upon his throne : this is the attitude of supremacy and dignity ; he sitteth while all other beings stand before him to receive his commands, bow in adoration, or are prostrate in abasement. He sitteth upon his throne : it is the attitude of ease and perfect security. All things change and pass away ; the time approaches when heaven and earth shall flee away from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and no place be found for them ; but though these shall perish, yet shall he endure ; though they shall be changed, he continues the same, and his years shall have no end. No rebellions shake the throne of God ; though "the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing," yet "he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh ; the Lord shall have them in derision." The throne of God is a rock in the midst of the ever-rolling ocean of created existence, that heaves and swells with ceaseless change ; but, in comparison of Him, its mightiest billows have but their moment of existence, and sink into the mass at the base of the immovable throne of the Everlasting One.

But, above all, mark the place of his throne as displayed in this wonderful vision : it is not exhibited as if placed amidst the withered scenes of paradise, blasted by man's fatal transgression, guarded by the cherubim and flaming sword, forbidding all access to the tree of life : it is not shown on the rock of Horeb, veiled with clouds and darkness, the lightnings issuing forth, and the thunder rolling, and the clangours of the angel's trumpets sounding forth, all things marking the presence of the sovereign Lawgiver, and declaring the terrors of his law to guilty man : not on the cinerous ruins of a smoking world, the wreck of all these scenes of grandeur and loveliness. There it shall stand at the last, when the clement mediatorial hour is past, and no sinner thenceforth shall be received to mercy ; there it shall stand, but, thank God, it stands not there now. His throne is seen by the prophet where we may see it ourselves : it stands in the temple ; it has been sprinkled with the blood of propitiation ; it is now the mercy seat. To the truly penitent all its terror appears softened with grace. From the height of that glory he looks down upon him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at his word ; he stretches out from it his sceptre to encourage you to draw nigh, and bids you, at this hour, seek and find his mercy, present your petitions, and bear away his blessing.

Bow, then, in deep reverence before the majesty of God, but come boldly to the throne of grace; confess your sins, trust in the victim whose blood has been sprinkled there, and take your pardon as the gift of his love; commit all your ways to him who thus in grace rules over all, and he will show you that, high and lifted up as he is, you shall not be forgotten of him, but that the very hairs of your head are numbered, and all your steps directed by him.

II. The second of these temple scenes displays to us the ineffable and incomprehensible nature of God.

Glorious as are the manifestations, clear as are the revelations of God,—through the whole series of ages this grand revelation which we possess has been brightening into ampler developements,—yet let not the vanity of man suppose that he can, by searching, find out God, or know the Almighty to perfection. This is scenically, but most impressively, represented to us in the vision before us: his train—the skirts of the Shekinah—filled the temple, its fainter rays beaming from the central blaze in the holiest of all, and irradiating the more distant objects. But even that was too much for man; and it is therefore added, “And the house was filled with smoke;” a veil was thus drawn over what was too bright and dazzling for mortal vision; and though God dwelt in the light, yet it was light involving itself in thick darkness: the prophet thus saw in vision what the psalmist had before declared, that “clouds and darkness are round about him;” as the children of Israel beheld “the glory of the Lord appear in the cloud.”

My brethren, we come to the temple to be reminded that revelation has not superseded mystery; that, after all these disclosures, “Lo, these are but parts of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of him!” As to his dispensations, we are still to walk by faith rather than by sight; and as to the depths of his nature, rather to adore than reason. Consider, then, this subject with holy awe, and endeavour to impress on your minds the practical consequences which depend upon it: it is the nature of an infinite Being to be incomprehensible by finite beings; he must be mysterious; the train of his glory must enwrap itself in cloud; and after all these bursts of splendour it is still true, that “the Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.” If we could fully know God, we must either be equal to him, or he must lose the glory of his nature and come down to ourselves: this is true philosophy, and true religion accords with it.

The most favoured saints have not found out the Almighty to perfection. There is the answer to the prayer of Moses, “I beseech thee show me thy glory:” “And he said, Thou canst not see my face. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen:” the whole body of glory was to be put out of sight, like the sun below the horizon, and only the twilight, the light intermingled with darkness, to be disclosed to mortal gaze. So was it with St. Paul, wondrous man as he was, and endowed with so many gifts: “And now,” said he, “we see through a glass darkly;” and after an amazing sweep of thought along the Divine dispensations, he stops on the brink, and cries, “O the depth of the

riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !” Nay, go to the angels that excel in strength,—in strength of intellect : seraphs gaze, but they have not, by searching, found out God. Why are they before the cloud, as well as in the light of the Divine presence ? Why are they still gazing ? This is their constant attitude ; new wonders open to their view, fresh developments are vouchsafed, and “ O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God !” is as truly the language of angels as of men.

O then, my God, let me remember this when dark and inexplicable dispensations surround me ! I cannot fathom thy counsels ; but I know that in them there is the highest reason. Let me remember this when I look abroad on thy public dispensations to the world : if I cannot trace thy footsteps as to myself, how much more intricate must be thy plans as to millions of immortal men ! But what is dark to me is light to thee : with thee is no darkness at all ; for it is the imperfection of the creature which creates it, as the mists arising from earth and gathering into clouds may obscure the brightness of the sun, while his own region is undimmed by a vapour, and—the true emblem there of thee—he dwells in his inaccessible splendour. Let me remember this when bold men would tempt me to speculate by the aids of my own weak reason on thy perfections. I shrink from the attempt : I content myself with thy own word, with that measure of light which it hath pleased thee to give ; and I dare not break through to gaze where “ dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear.” And let me remember this in every solemn act of worship, that I may put forth all my strength in serving thee : this is the reason for supreme love and supreme praise. The glories yet to be revealed are infinite, continually unfolding in new disclosures of eternal perfection ; well, therefore, is it said by the author of Ecclesiasticus, “ When ye glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as ye can ; for even yet will he far exceed : and when ye exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary ; for ye can never go far enough. Who hath seen him, that he might tell us ? and who can magnify him as he is ? There are yet hid greater things than these be, for we have seen but a few of his works.”

III. The third view presented by this vision is that of the adorable and awful holiness of God.

At all times, and especially in drawing near to him, the most lively impressions of the Divine holiness ought to rest on our minds ; and to this subject our attention is constantly and powerfully drawn throughout the whole Scriptures. Mark his eminent titles : “ The Holy One of Israel ;” “ A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he ;” “ Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” Mark it in his acts, especially in the constitution of man : he has connected misery with every degree of vice ; happiness with holiness. Mark it in his law : that is the visible expression of his own purity, and therefore holy, just, and good. Mark it in his visible image on earth, his Son incarnate : see there how truly venerable, as well as amiable, is perfect goodness. Mark it in his Gospel : to wash away sin there must be the blood of the spotless Lamb of God ; the cross declares the love of God to man, but it declares his awful holiness too ; and then the gift of the Spirit, to regenerate and sanctify man. Mark it in his judg-

ments : what are the sorrows and pains of earth, what death, what hell itself, but fearful declarations of the just and holy displeasure of God against sin ? Mark it in the rewards of the righteous : all pure and holy, and requiring purity and holiness in order to their possession and enjoyment. Mark it in the place of this vision : it is the holy of holies, the holy place of the Holy One, that is, of the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity ; hear the adoring hymn of the seraphim ; to the King, the Lord of hosts, they bring the acknowledgment of his holiness ; and see them bowing with prostrate awe ; “ with twain they covered their faces,” veiling themselves in the presence of the Divine glory, as though feeling the force of those strong words, “ He charged his angels with folly, and the heavens are not clean in his sight.”

If angels tremble while they gaze, what, then, should man feel ?

IV We have the answer in the next scene which the vision presents ; that of a sinful man convicted and laid prostrate and silent before this holy God : “ Then said I, Who is me ! for I am undone ;” as Lowth gives it us, “ I am dumb,” “ I am silenced.” And why thus dumb ? “ I am a man of unclean lips,” and therefore unfit to take a part in these celestial services ; I am dumb, I am unable to justify myself ; I attempt it not ; I can urge nothing against a sentence which should exclude me from the service and presence of this most holy God.

Behold in this our own sad picture : “ We are men of unclean lips.” The expression refers not to the lips only ; we are entirely unholy, and therefore are our lips unholy, and unfit to pronounce the name of the Holy One, unfit to pray, to praise. Nor is it our case alone : we “ dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ;” our race is fallen, our associates are like ourselves. How obvious is this ! Think of your open violations of God’s law ; of your indulged thoughts of evil, still more numerous than your actions ; of your evil tempers, such as the pride which has elated you, the anger which has inflamed you, the malice which has burned smoulderingly, waiting for the fit occasion to burst forth, or the envy which has corroded you. Think of your love of the world, your creature idolatry, your forgetfulness of God, your resolute opposition to his will. Think of your insensibility to the love of Christ, your resistance of the Holy Spirit, your care to close your hearts against him, perhaps your profane mockings at his work in others. Think of your real unbelief : you have cast his words behind you, and disregarded them as though utterly unworthy of credit ; and when you have, in conformity with established customs, engaged in his worship, with what formality and lifelessness has it been done ! Are not these your sins ? Do they not appear to you as innumerable ? And must not the heart that originated them be “ desperately wicked ?” Thus I charge the facts upon you ; but I call you, likewise, to contrast all this with that display of the holiness of God which this vision unfolds. The God whom Isaiah saw is here ; open your eyes and behold him in his word : his throne is high and lifted up ; his train fills the spacious temple of the universe ; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of his glory ; and how often, at his voice, do “ the posts of the door,” the very foundations of earth, “ move” and shake ! Even now are seraphs veiling their faces, and crying, “ Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts !” And even now many a sinful man, in the search

ings of his own heart, in his closet, struck by the Divine purity, cries, "Wo is me! for I am undone." And is there not the same wo against you? the wo of the law: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them;" the wo of the Gospel: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" the wo of a miserable, because hopeless, death; the wo of the judgment day; the wo of an eternal exclusion from heaven, never to bear part in the song, at once adoring and transporting, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" What are your own sentiments? Are you insensible to all this? Then the wo will go home with you; it will hang over you by night and by day. But O, if the conviction is fastened on your conscience and you are now sinking in guilty shame and abasement; if you are saying, "Wo is me, for I am dumb," my lips are sealed, I cannot deny the charge; and your sighs are arising and speaking what words cannot with sufficient emphasis declare, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

V. Then turn to the final view, the last of these temple scenes,—and, thank God, not an unfrequent one,—a convicted, self-abased, and penitent man pardoned, and consecrated to the service of God: "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

What are we taught by this wondrous representation? That for guilty man there is pardon, that for unholy man there is purification, and that lips, once unclean, but now sanctified, may join in the hymns of seraphim, and, without dread, approach to God, and celebrate the glories even of his holiness: this we are taught, but not this only; not merely is the fact, but the manner of it, brought before us. See, then, the means: the instrument of purification is fire; but not any kind of fire, fire from any place; it is fire from the altar, the altar where atonement is made for sin; fire, therefore, both of Divine origin, and coming to us through the great Propitiation. We can be at no loss for an interpretation of the symbols thus employed: our altar is the cross; the propitiatory sacrifice, the spotless Lamb of God; by the merit of his death, and the baptizing fire of his Spirit, are the guilty and polluted pardoned and sanctified to God. O thou, then, who art saying, "Wo is me! for I am dumb;" who hidest thy unhallowed face in the dust before God; lift up thine head; there must be an application to thy soul, as of the coal to the prophet's lips. But God has his messengers to bring his blessings near: reject them not; receive them by faith, and a voice from heaven shall speak in thy inmost soul, and say, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

And what shall be the result? Why, then the wo shall be removed; for "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Then we are no longer dumb, our lips are opened, and our mouths show forth the praise of our pardoning God. Now, then, pardoned and hallowed men, go to your God without fear; go as to the temple, and imitate the seraphs there; gaze with them on the glory of God in Christ Jesus, for Isaiah saw his glory, and spake of him. Adore with them: "With two of their wings they covered their feet." Among

orientals this expresses reverence ; and well may you bow in humble reverence before him : the sense of pardon will humble you, even while it fills you with holy exultation ; there will be none of the boldness of self confidence ; you will be confounded, and never open your mouth in boasting, when God is pacified toward you for all that you have done. “And with twain they covered their face :” and you behold the glory of the Lord, and it may well dazzle and overpower you by the grandeur of its displays, though they teach you the love as well as the holiness of God. And go serve with them : “with twain they did fly :” they stood ready to execute his commands ; and you, too, are called to be his cheerful servants, to worship at his footstool when he calls you there, and, when he sends you forth, readily and swiftly to move to do all his will. Thus gaze, thus adore, thus serve with the seraphim, live and love like them, until you enter the temple in heaven, and the vision is changed into an eternal reality.

SERMON XCV.—*The Angel flying through the Midst of Heaven.*

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him ; for the hour of his judgment is come : and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters,” Rev. xiv, 6, 7.

THE prophets of the Old Testament spoke of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow ; they also described the time and circumstances of his birth, the nature of his miracles, and the manner in which he should exercise his ministry ; yet, for the most part, they pass at once from his cross to his throne, from his sufferings to his universal victories, annihilating, as it were, by their rapid flight, the whole of the intervening period,—a period marked by the terrible struggles, and the various conditions, of the Church.

This chasm in prophecy is filled up by the prophets of the New Testament, especially by this book, of which the Church of Christ is the subject ; her afflictions, persecutions, and final triumphs are here described, as are also her enemies, their malice, fraud, violence, temporary successes, and final overthrow. Angels, saints, devils, all occupy their respective places in these scenic and sublime visions ; heaven, earth, and hell are, by turns, agitated in a struggle on which human salvation depends, till the glorious catastrophe unfolds itself, and all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ.

In the chapter preceding that out of which the text is taken we have a prediction of the rise of the beast, the great anti-christ, the Church of Rome ; all the characters in the prophecy apply to that Church,—persecution, idolatry, blasphemy : “And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them : and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations,” Rev. xiii, 6, 7. That anti-

christian power almost destroyed the Church, the true spiritual Church, and filled the world with darkness.

Yet before the final destruction of this power the vision of the text commences; for afterward another angel followed, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen," Rev. xviii, 2. The period of the text is, therefore, probably that of the reformation. At that period the angel, the reformed ministry, was seen in the midst of heaven; before him the heavens were dark; not only was there no angel to be seen, but scarcely a star appeared to lead the world to Christ. Now an angel unfolds the volume of the everlasting Gospel: before this period the Bible was hidden, and there was little or no preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus; and the men who sustained the office of ministers in the Church, were occupied in the performance of vain ceremonies: but, at this important period, the Scriptures were translated into the various languages of Europe, a preaching ministry was commenced, and a great part of the kingdom of the beast fell.

But this new state of things in the Church was not confined to the time of the reformation; a preaching ministry then commenced, but the commission of the angel was to all nations; and the angel proceeds in his course. The description contained in the text answers particularly to the ministry of our day. Now the sacred roll of the Scriptures is unfolded in the sight of all nations; now the angel has passed the bounds of Christendom, and cries to heathen lands, "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Regarding the text, therefore, as a prediction of a zealous ministry, to be raised up by God for the conversion of all nations, and that even now it is receiving its accomplishment, let us consider,

I. The subject of its ministration.

II. The distinguishing characteristics of that ministration.

III. Its extensive commission.

IV. Its objects.

We direct our attention,

I. To the subject of its ministration: "the everlasting Gospel."

This blessing God designs by the Christian ministry to confer upon the whole world. It is "everlasting," the Gospel of ages: nor is it any new invention; it was preached to the patriarchs, adumbrated in the law, and a subject of prophecy: and it will never end; no future dispensation of Divine truth and grace will ever be introduced, so as to supersede it; it reveals the full salvation which God has provided for lost mankind, and nothing more, therefore, is needed. Let it go, then, into all nations, and be proclaimed to people of every tongue and clime, and the world will prove, by experience, that it needs nothing more to make it holy and happy. Nor shall it ever perish: "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you," 1 Peter i, 24, 25.

It is not my design to explain what is comprehended in the term "Gospel:" this is a subject with which, I presume, you are all acquainted; but as this is the boon which we propose to send to all the

world, we may briefly dwell upon the suitability of the Gospel to the wants of the heathen; and on this ground a motive to our pious exertions.

1. The heathen have lost the knowledge of God.

We may infer the greatness of this loss from the fact, that the knowledge of God is the only foundation of religion. But how can this knowledge be restored? It is only taught by three volumes,—nature, providence, and revelation, either traditional or written. But nature and providence never taught this knowledge without the comment of revelation; and hence as the revealed truth of God perished among the people, the characters of God, impressed upon his works and ways, became indistinct: “the heavens” ceased to “declare the glory of God, and the firmament to show forth his handy work. Day unto day” no longer “uttered speech,” nor did “night unto night” any more actually “show knowledge” concerning him; and providence became, in the estimation of mankind, a mere rabble of events, without discipline and without a leader.

Nothing restores the lost knowledge of God but the Gospel. We have no instance upon record in which that knowledge was restored by any other means; but where the Gospel comes, it may be said, “the true light now shineth.” As the orb of day, rolling up the steep of the horizon, lifts a beauteous world out of mist and darkness, and presents it to the wondering eye, so the great truths of religion are seen in all their sublimity and grandeur wherever the Gospel comes:

“The Invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye.”

This light emblazons all nature; the “heavens” again “declare the glory of God,” and the events of life, in all their variety, connect themselves with a guiding hand; and then, to the teaching of nature and providence, it adds its own glorious revelations of grace and mercy to sinners, through the sacrifice and intercession of Christ.

2. They are without the knowledge of their sinful state.

We grant that they have a general knowledge that they are sinners; for they are subject to the accusations of an evil conscience, and to many fears: but they have no adequate conception of the extent of their guilt, and the greatness of their danger; for they know not the “exceeding sinfulness of sin.” Yet this knowledge is necessary; for there is no acceptance without it; pardon is never vouchsafed unless the heart be broken and contrite. In regard to the heathen, the ignorance in question is fatal to the order of society: the greatest evils are indulged among them, and are even practised without shame. To have a salutary conviction of sin, the proper standard of holiness and righteousness is necessary. The standard which was formerly set up in heathen lands has been brought down; but let the everlasting Gospel be sent, with its holy laws, its awfully reverential examples, with its attractive but reproofing graces, and what is the effect? Hear it in St. Paul: “When the commandment came,”—the commandment illumined by the Gospel,—“sin revived, and I died.” Then penitence was produced, godly sorrow for sin ensued, and the foundation of every personal and social virtue was laid. Heathen practices, however reputable among heathens, are things of which those who are enlightened and converted by the Gospel “are now ashamed,” Rom. vi, 21.

3. They are without the knowledge of acceptance and pardon through the true Mediator.

It is true that we find among them temples, sacrifices, and priests ; they have a whole sacrificial system ; but of what avail is it ? According to the Scriptures, the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin. Among the heathen the true and ancient intent of sacrifice is lost ; it is no longer typical of the perfect sacrifice of Christ, but is used as a mere ceremony ; and after all their sacrifices sin remains, the justice of God is not satisfied, but his wrath abides upon them.

What is the principle of sacrifice among the modern heathen ? I once thought that all their sacrifices and blood shedding were an indication of a sense of guilt, and of a blind, but earnest, effort to propitiate a justly-deserved vengeance of superior powers ; but I am compelled by what I have read, and by converse with missionaries, to give up this view of their case. In the generality of them, at least, there is nothing that approaches to what is so like a gracious principle : the object which they have in view is some temporal interest, or, at best, the avoiding of some future punishment, and the securing of a better state hereafter. O it is pitiable to see rites which formerly were expressive of the sorrows of a contrite heart, now a barren custom ; and various forms of terror, as to the future, flitting constantly before the mind, and arising not from a sense of deserved wrath, but from the malice of some demon god ; and yet that no relief is obtained !

But the "everlasting Gospel" is speeding its way to them, and that testifies of Jesus ; of Jesus who came from heaven, who died, and rose again, and maketh intercession for us ; the "man who receiveth sinners," who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ;" whose blood "purgeth the conscience from dead works," whose Spirit attests the pardon of sin, whose guardian care is the refuge in all the storms of life, and whose entrance into heaven has opened the way to all that follow him in the path of holy obedience.

From such a system we have every thing to hope ; it is the power of God unto salvation. This, then, is the subject of the missionary ministry. We proceed to consider,

II. The characteristics of this ministry.

As we are interested in the message, so are we in the manner of its communication.

1. It is the ministry of men.

The term "angel" is not a designation of nature, but of office ; ministers are called angels in Holy Scripture. The ministry of the Gospel is exercised by men, that they may not only teach doctrine, but be the witnesses of what they teach. Angels could give instruction in a more perfect manner than men ; but having never experienced the sorrows of repentance, and the joys of pardon, having never gained the mastery over a corrupted nature, they could not say, "What we have felt and seen declare we unto you ;" nor could they say, as the result of their own experience, in reference to the process of salvation, "We are witnesses of these things." Such, however, is the language of those ministers whom the Lord sends on his errands of grace and mercy.

The "treasure" of evangelical truth is also put into "earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men ;"

feeble instrumentality is employed, that the glory of the work may redound to God. O glorious triumph of the weak over the strong! Things that are not bring to nought things that are; that no flesh may glory in the presence of the Lord, but the work may be acknowledged to be his own.

Nor is it unworthy of remark, that if angels had been employed in the preaching of the Gospel, no expense would have been incurred, and the co-operation of the whole Church would have been necessarily excluded. On the plan actually adopted, Christians in general have an opportunity of attaching themselves to the cause of Christianity throughout the world; missionaries are the "messengers of the Churches;" and every lover of Christ can assist in promoting the glory of his Lord in the heathen world, and shall share in the reward of bringing all nations to the obedience of faith.

2. It is an authorized ministry.

An "angel" is a messenger; and a messenger must be sent. The command of the Lord is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." It is not to be questioned, then, that Christian ministers are sent to all the world. They are sometimes directed in regard to their respective fields of labour, by particular indications; as St. Paul saw in a vision a man of Macedonia, who said, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us;" and from this he "assuredly gathered," that the Lord called him to labour in that particular country. But are ministers now sent to the heathen under the Divine direction? Can this be doubted by any attentive observer? See the remarkable openings into pagan nations; the success which has already attended the ministry of the word in the dark parts of the earth; success which could not have been achieved but under the immediate blessing of the God of all grace. But I want no other proof that God has raised up the men we send to evangelize the heathen. If the voice had said, "Whom shall we send? and who will go for us?" and none answered to the call, we might conclude that it was not our duty to attempt this great and most desirable work. But while the heathen are imploring instruction, and access to them is wonderfully provided, here are men duly qualified, whose hearts burn with the love of Christ, and of the souls which he has redeemed by his blood, who count not their own lives dear unto them, and who individually say to the Churches, "Here am I; send me."

3. It is an open and undisguised ministry.

St. Paul gloried in using "great plainness of speech;" and in this he appears in striking contrast to the priests of heathenism, and the apostles of popery. The heathen had their mysteries, which were carefully concealed from the vulgar, and only disclosed to the initiated; and in the dark ages of popery the Scriptures, and other means of religious knowledge, were carefully withheld from the people in general, and notions the most crude and groundless were inculcated as the sacred truths of Christianity. The reformation brought with it a flood of light; and recognized the right of all men to read the oracles of God, and to judge of their meaning. "To the poor the Gospel is preached." in full accordance with the design of its Divine Author. What joyful tidings has the Gospel brought to you! and what blessings has it been a means of imparting to you! And the same will it be to the benighted

Hindoo and African. There is nothing in Christianity that requires concealment ; and Christ is set forth as the author of "salvation to the ends of the earth."

4. It is a zealous and successful ministry.

The attitude of "flying," in which the angel is placed before us in the text, denotes zeal and activity ; an eagerness to deliver the message, and to carry it into the remotest regions. And, thank God, we have such a ministry in progress. It has met with difficulties, and future difficulties await it ; yet it is pressing onward. Clouds and storms may meet the angel, but they cannot arrest his progress ; for his authority is Divine ; and the arm of the Lord will prepare his way. Such is the intensity of zeal which animates the true missionary, that opposition only inspires new ardour, and prompts to more strenuous and determined efforts ; and he considers that nothing is done till the sound of salvation has reached the utmost parts of the earth.

We proposed to consider,

III. Its extensive commission. It is sent to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

On this subject several remarks suggest themselves.

1. That the Gospel is equally needed by all nations, and equally adapted to all.

Here I find a splendid proof of the Divinity of the Gospel. It assumes that men are every where guilty and depraved. But who could know this, except God himself ? The earth was but partially known in the age of the apostles ; there were then extensive countries undiscovered ; and how could men, unless they were Divinely inspired, know the character and state of the people in those unknown regions, whose very existence would only be discovered in ages then remote ? Who could draw a picture of man, which man in all ages and nations will recognize, but He that "knew what was in man ?"

Again : men are not only diversified by national genius, but they also differ in regard to rank, and knowledge, and a thousand other circumstances ; and who but God himself could form a system of religious instruction which should, in all ages and nations, and among all the different orders of mankind, be equally efficient ? We have not in the Gospel one mode of treatment for Greeks, and another for barbarians. The salvation which it reveals is a "common salvation ;" and among those that have accepted it "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free ; but Christ is all, and in all," Col. iii, 11.

2. That there is an essential difference between the Jewish and Christian dispensations.

The Jewish dispensation was restricted to one nation and period ; the Christian dispensation is universal, embracing all the different tribes of men, and extending to the end of time. The Jewish dispensation acted on the defensive, especially against idolatry, and was intended specially to guard the Jewish people from that terrible evil ; the Christian dispensation is offensive, and assails, without compromise, every species of error and sin. It marches up to every fortress, and seizes every enemy ; nor will its efforts cease till the whole world shall vow allegiance to the Lord Christ, to whom the dominion of the world belongs. The religion of Moses might be sought out, and its benefits

enjoyed, by individuals belonging to heathen nations, who had the privilege of becoming proselytes, and attending its worship under certain restrictions. Whereas Christianity goes forth, through all nations, that she may seek and save the lost.

3. The extensive commission recorded in the text is the foundation of universal philanthropy.

Enmities and prejudices among mankind have been originated and cherished by the distinctions of sect and country, and by rival interests; but the Gospel overleaps all these distinctions, and exhibits mankind in the light of one vast brotherhood. God is the Father of all; Christ is the Redeemer of all; the Christian ministry is a ministry addressed to all; and Christians regard themselves as the brethren of all. This character of our holy and benevolent religion is beautifully depicted in the parable of the good Samaritan, where a foreigner, whose very name was hateful to the Jews, and whose countrymen were regarded by that people with the deepest hostility, spontaneously ministered every requisite relief to a Jew who had fallen among thieves, even when a priest and a Levite of his own nation "passed by on the other side," and left him to perish. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

4. It gives noble and expanded views to Christians.

Study and understand your own religion. It is not one among many modifications of human opinion. It is from God; and is intended by him, like Aaron's rod, to swallow up every other. In this respect a Christian is truly a party man. His religion will tolerate nothing that is opposed to it. He considers his King to be universal; and his heart bounds at the thought that the Lord is wearing many crowns. The Church shall see all the crowns of the world surrendered to him, one by one, and will shout his growing triumphs.

Christianity interests the heart in the greatest and most sublime struggles. It places its disciples on the hill of observation, and shows them the mighty conflict between truth and error, the armies of Christ, and the powers of darkness. And it invests them with an elevated character. It declares them to be "the light of the world;" calls them to take a part in the holy strife; and, in regard to their principles and aims, raises them inconceivably above the mere men of the world, whose views are confined within a narrow circle, and extend not beyond the present life.

We proceed to consider,

IV. The specific objects of the angel's ministry.

The Scripture speaks of an interesting ministry as exercised by many angels; and we accompany them with delight in their descent to this lower world. They delivered righteous Lot; they struck the fatal blow at the Egyptian oppressor, and delivered Israel; they spread the vision of the future before the beloved Daniel; they cried, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen;" and they will be employed to bind the old serpent. But none of their ministries are so delightful as that which is assigned to the angel in the text. He is the animated symbol of the missionary ministry, passing from kingdom to kingdom, inculcating the fear of God, setting up his worship, and making all things yield their revenue of glory to him. Hear his message: "Fear God; give glory to him; and worship him that made the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Consider these animating topics,

and glow with ardour while you recollect that the angels you have sent forth are producing all these important effects in the different nations of the earth.

1. The angel cries out, "Fear him."

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; the source and guard of virtue. But the heathen are without it. They have religious fear, but not the fear of God. Theirs is the fear of imaginary deities, objects of terror; and it darkens and overwhelms the mind. This is not the fear of God. He is indeed greater and more terrible than they all are. They are local; he is every where. From the wrath of one, they may fly to the succour of another; but none can take the guilty out of his hands. What, indeed, is their power in comparison with his? See him in his might of wrath, overwhelming the world with a flood; smiting Egypt with tremendous plagues; by an angel destroying the host of Sennacherib; hissing for his armies to destroy the holy city; and in the terrible scenes of this book. Why, then, is the fear of God a more mitigated principle than the fear of idol deities? Because, amidst all this dim and lowering brightness of wrath, there are circumfused the mild and lovely splendours of his mercy. "Fear him that made the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Visible nature is full of his goodness; but his glory is especially seen in the face of Jesus Christ. In the economy of redemption and salvation he descends, and proclaims his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," *Exod. xxxiv, 6, 7.*

The fear of God is a mixture of awe and love. "We love him because he first loved us;" and having given his Son to die for our sins, and justified us through his blood, has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying *Abba, Father*. Happy state of man, reconciled to God by the death of Christ, standing in a filial relation to the Lord of heaven and earth, and bowing with silent awe before him whom the cherubim and seraphim adore! And happy, too, is he who disperses the gloom of a pagan mind, and leads the wretched wanderer to God in Christ. Him he now regards as great and holy; yet as his Father and his Friend.

2. To establish his worship.

This is another effect of the promulgation of the Gospel. How interesting is a Christian Sabbath! Business is suspended; a solemn stillness pervades even the crowded city; families are moving with willing steps to the house of prayer; a spiritual ministry of the word is blessed to the conviction of the formalist and the sinner, and to the comfort and edification of believers; while those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, in more private circles, enjoy the communion of saints, and build up each other in faith and love. What a contrast to the guilt, the pollution, the wretchedness, the insane levity of heathenism!

Behold, then, another great end of the missionary ministry: instead of idols, to place the true God in his temples. Instead of polluting orgies, to teach men to wash their hands in innocency, and thus to encompass God's altar. Instead of indulging malignant passions, to bow at the foot of the Christian altar, to lay aside all malice; knowing

that if they forgive not men their trespasses, neither will their heavenly Father forgive them. Instead of vain mediators, to have the name of Jesus in which to trust. Instead of vain prayers, crying, "O Baal, hear us;" and waiting from noon to night without receiving any answer, hearing neither voice nor sound; to obtain direct access to God through the Son of his love, and be able to say, "Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me!" Instead of being left to themselves in sorrow and weakness, to "come to the throne of grace," and "obtain mercy, and grace to help in time of need." Instead of the worship which pollutes, so that the altar is the most detestable place that can be approached, to substitute a worship which calls all the powers of the soul into exercise, and prepares it for the loftier worship of heaven. Effects of this nature have already been produced among the pagan slaves of the West Indies, the Hottentots, and even in the jungles of India.

3. To claim for God his revenue of praise and glory

Nothing glorifies God in the heathen world. The glory due to his name is given to vain idols, the work of men's hands. The idea of glorifying God never enters the mind of a heathen, even in those exercises which he deems religious. Songs are heard in pagan lands, but not songs of praise to God, the Giver of all good.

But when the commission of the angel is accomplished, how different will be the scene! God will then be glorified in the mighty moral change which will be presented in a regenerated world. He will be glorified in the exaltation of Christ; in the dispensations of Providence, connected with the spread of his truth, and the conversion of the nations; in all the works of nature. He will be seen in all; in every star that shines; in every shower that descends; in every plant that grows; and in all the objects with which his human worshippers are surrounded. The mighty plan of grace and mercy is advancing, bringing new glory to God in the highest, till all is accomplished, so as to inspire both men and angels with eternal admiration and love.

1. Behold, then, a glorious object of contemplation,—the progress of the angel in the midst of heaven.

This is an object on which you should fix your constant gaze. The honour of God, and the endless happiness of millions of redeemed souls, are dependent upon his flight.

2. It depends on you to speed or delay the angel.

Some who are going on in noble flight have been sent forth by your liberality. Your prayers and efforts will this day give additional vigour to their pinions. Others are waiting to commence their course; and they wait to receive the impulse from you.

3. Let it not discourage us, that the world may be tossed and troubled.

This "angel" cries that the hour of God's judgments is come; and yet he holds on his course. God clears the way in judgment; and his Gospel follows after. He ploughs up the furrow; and the seed of evangelical truth is cast into the earth. "He hath promised saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

SERMON XCVI.—*The Cherubim and the Mercy Seat.*

“And over it the cherubims of glory, shadowing the mercy seat,” Heb. ix, 5.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” The superiority of our privilege is undoubted and incalculable; but we have not thereby lost our interest in that wondrous mode of teaching vouchsafed to the ancient Church, in those “divers manners” in which God chose to adumbrate or reveal the promised salvation. The great plan of redeeming mercy was formed in the mind of God in eternity; there infinite wisdom arranged, and infinite love cherished it; the world was framed for its manifestation, but the times and seasons were reserved by the Father in his own power. But though it was prepared when man fell, it was not then fully announced. It is not for us to ask why; it is enough for us to know that, “in the fulness of time,” in its maturity and ripeness, at the very best possible period, “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” In the mean time typical sacrifices bled, typical saviours rescued the Church, typical priests interceded, typical kings swayed sceptres of righteousness, and a succession of prophets struck the lyre of sacred song with inspired impulses, hynning the future advent of the great Salvation himself, his sacrificial death, and reign of righteousness and love: thus was the attention of men kept up till Christ himself appeared, and all the types were fulfilled in him.

This typical system the apostle describes in this epistle by two very expressive terms, “patterns,” and “shadows.” “Patterns,” the mere outlines, unfilled up with light and shade, and colour, but still presenting a tracery accurate and instructive: “shadows,” which represented the general form, but not its separate and particular features, not its spirit and life. Patterns and shadows of heavenly things, that is, of things in the heavens; not of things in the heavens then when the patterns were drawn, the shadows projected, but of things in the heavens when St. Paul wrote. And they are heavenly, not only because of their origin,—for their great author is not of the earth, earthy, but the Lord from heaven,—but principally because that scene which the tabernacle of old typified is now realized in heaven: there is the true tabernacle, there the real throne of grace, there the great High Priest, and there the glory.

Behold, then, the reciprocal uses and relations of the law and the Gospel: by these types the expectation of good men was awakened, their faith upheld and maintained, and their desires thrown forward to future ages, when the better things for which they hoped should be made manifest. O with what intensity were they often studied! “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law:” “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” Thus were

they "searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The law has now fulfilled its glorious course, but it still remains to instruct us; we see it under a stronger light, and the key of its mysteries is put into our hands; under our eye the outline, the pattern, is filled up, the shadow brightens into the vivid representation of the great substance, and all is evangelical beauty and glory: led by the hand of our Divine Instructor, the great High Priest himself, we survey the furniture of the old temple; and, while we tread its hallowed courts, and gaze upon the ancient symbols of himself, with which even the earthly sanctuary was filled, exclaim, as though standing in the excellent glory, "Master, it is good for us to be here."

In the text the apostle calls our attention to one of these typical subjects; to one of the most sacred of them, and the most comprehensive in its typical character; to one which most directly leads us to the passion, and death, and glory, of our Redeemer. Let us, then, turn aside with reverence and love united, to see this great sight; and may the instruction it conveys be sealed by the teaching Spirit on every heart.

The apostle is speaking of the tabernacle which was after the second veil, and which was called "the holiest of all:" this had "the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat."

When we turn our attention to this sacred symbol, we observe several things brought together, in one grand evangelical type, and presented before us. You recollect the structure of the ark: it was a chest which contained the tables of the law; over this was placed the lid, or covering, which was the propitiatory, or mercy seat; over all, there were sculptured representations of the cherubim,—themselves representations of the angelic host,—shadowing the mercy seat with their wings; and between the wings of the cherubim there was the bright cloud of the Divine presence, the visible glory of the Lord. Now, surely there was some design in bringing together all these different objects into one great symbol or type;—the tables of the law, the covering of the mercy seat, the representation of the cherubim, and the glory of God, the cloud of the Divine presence, surmounting them. Brethren, they teach us that between these things, in consequence of the evangelical dispensation, there are most interesting relations; that between these things there is a harmony in which all are engaged: in other words, that between law and grace; between the administration of grace to man and the heavenly world; and between the whole of this dispensation and arrangement, and the glorious, manifested presence of Jehovah, there is a close and interesting connection. These are the points on which I shall endeavour to fix your attention.

I. In the first place, we are taught by this sacred symbol, an ark thus constructed and accompanied, that there is now, under the evangelical dispensation, a relation between law and grace.

We learn from 1 Kings viii, 9, that, "there was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when

the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel ;” so that Aaron’s rod and the manna were in the holiest place, but not in the ark. These tables of stone were written with the finger of God, and laid up in the ark as a testimony, as a perpetual witness between himself and the people. But why are they here where every thing speaks of grace ? Why are the tables of the law, which were “a witness against” the people, Deut. xxxi, 26, placed in the sanctuary where every thing spake of mercy ; the court where the blood of atonement was presented, and pardons dispensed ; in the very place which seemed to be consecrated to the forgiveness of sins, and the disclosure of the gracious designs of God as Redeemer ? Brethren, this question may be easily answered.

1. The law was there, in the first place, because it is eternal, and must therefore harmonize with every dispensation of religion to man.

The whole Gospel is founded upon the eternity of the law ; for if its authority did not continue, we could not sin against it, and should therefore need no mercy : the very nature of the law bears with it internal evidence that it must endure for ever. The tables of stone contained the ten commandments ; and our Lord tells us that in the summary of them is contained the great one of love : “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself.” To the law, then, you can object nothing ; it is holy, and just, and good ; it connects the creature with God, and renders obedience delightful, by making it the effect of love ; it connects the creature with the creature, and binds them with a golden chain into a happy family, from which had sin never entered the world, all wrongs would be unknown, and where evil affections could have found no place. A wise, a holy, a just, a benevolent Governor could have willed no less ; and so long as his government continues, so long must the law of love remain : less, therefore, would not be for the honour of God ; less would be for the misery, not for the happiness of the creature. This, therefore,—that all creatures should love himself, and each other for his sake,—is God’s standing will as to angels and men : this was the law of Eden, this was the law of Moses, and this great principle is taken up into the Christian dispensation. Wherever, then, you look for the Gospel you will find the law ; you go to the ark of the covenant, and the commands of God, written on imperishable tables, are there ; and when the redeemed shall have themselves passed within the veil, whither their Forerunner is for them entered, there, too, in the holiest of all, shall they find the same law, and observe it perfectly and for ever.

2. The tables of the law are there in the ark, and connected with evangelical symbols representing the dispensation of mercy to mankind, because it was the violation of the law by which the dispensation of mercy was rendered necessary.

What was the characteristic of the administration of the sanctuary ? The whole administration was through sacrifice and a mediator : man himself was kept from immediate approach to God ; the priest presented his sacrifices to God ; the priest pronounced the blessing of God upon him. What, brethren, does all this apparatus mean ? Why an altar, why a priesthood, why a mercy seat ? All are intended to remind us that the law has been broken, and that arrangements of

mercy are demanded by the sin and danger of man. The simple principle of a covenant of mere law is, "This do, and thou shalt live : " "The man that doeth these things shall live by them." If man had never sinned, there would have been no need of sacrifice, no need of mediation ; the very existence of such a gracious administration proves that law has been violated, and that man is a sinner. While you are obedient to the laws of your country, you suffer no restraint, no punishment from them ; you need not petition the king, employ interest, look out for a reprieve ; all these acts suppose that a capital offence has been committed. So the very Gospel implies our guilt : had you not been under sentence of death, Christ need not have died, the just for the unjust, to bring you to God. The ark of mercy has always within it a broken law to witness against you, nor can you come to the mercy seat without coming to the law. This, indeed, is the first thing we have to learn : we have sinned, we have broken every commandment, we have come under the curse, and the tables are put into the ark to teach us, that if they were not there, we could expect nothing but the law's malediction, and the execution of its sentence. Till you learn this lesson you are only as the Pharisee, commending himself, and condemned by his Judge ; but when you have learned it, acknowledging your misery, helplessness, and guilt, you cry with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

3. But we see the tables of the law thus connected with evangelical symbols, to intimate to us another truth, that the grand end of the administration of grace to man is the re-establishment of the law's dominion over him.

It is true that the penalty of law is an evil from which man must be freed, or he must perish ; but the dominion of law is no evil, and the re-establishment of it is the completion of the grace of Christ in restoring man to his proper happiness. I appeal to you whether it must not be so, and whether the Gospel would not be an imperfect system did it only propose to relieve us from the guilt and penalty of sin. Could you assure me that for every sin I should be exempt from punishment, and thus remove the gloom of apprehension from futurity, yet would that be enough ? If there were no healing for the wounded spirit, no regeneration, no principle of holiness, to be planted in the heart, and brought to perfection by Divine power, to influence the whole conduct and character of men for ever, could any of us be satisfied with it ? Would not even a generous nature, if saved from the fear of the consequences of sin, say, "Why, I owe all to God, who gave his Son to deliver me from eternal wrath, and to place me in circumstances of eternal felicity ; but shall I never love this God, my Deliverer, with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength ? Shall I enjoy an eternity of blessings from him, and yet have my heart in a state of eternal estrangement and opposition ? Shall I never be put into a condition to love my neighbour saint and my neighbour angel as myself, but must I be eternally in a spirit of anger, hatred, and uncharitableness ? O no, brethren : the grand end of this dispensation is certainly, in the first instance, to deliver us from the guilt and penalty of sin ; and then, in the next place, by the almighty grace of Christ, to implant within us principles which the influences of the Spirit shall carry on to maturity, that we may be filled with all the fruits of righteousness for

ever. We come not to a lawless mercy seat ; “ for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh ; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ; ” that so “ grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life,” and Christ present to the Father “ a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but being holy and without blemish.”

4. But this connection between the law and the mercy seat indicates, finally, that the administration of grace is in every part consistent with law.

This leads us to what many consider as the glorious peculiarity of the mercy seat. The mercy seat is what the apostle calls elsewhere “ the throne of grace.” The ark of the covenant, as we have said, was a chest in which were placed the tables of the law, and over this was placed the propitiatory or mercy seat. This was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices, the cloud of the Divine presence rested upon it, and the whole of it formed God’s throne of grace. And then observe, it was God’s throne of grace founded upon law. Intercessions were made before it, pardons were dispensed from it ; but the ark which supported the mercy seat contained the tables of the law, to show us that grace itself is administered in consistency with law. That the forgiveness of sin exhibits the mercy of God, the wisdom of the world could discover. Even the Socinian scheme could show us that. But that is not all. Is it just and right ? There are persons who tell us they reject the doctrine of the atonement, because they think that a Being of infinite goodness has a right to forgive as and whom he pleases. But we are met here by another consideration,—that this Being who is infinite goodness, is not less infinite justice. And here comes the difficulty. It is nothing to say that God is good, and that therefore he may forgive ; for God is just and holy, and therefore how can he forgive ? Brethren, the Gospel answers the question. We find that, though God is righteous, yet that he can forgive ; that he can be a just God and a Saviour. The very symbol on which I am discoursing indicates this. The tables of the law were, indeed, covered by the mercy seat ; but the mercy seat was sprinkled with the blood of atonement. You recollect the apostle’s argument, in the Epistle to the Romans, where he tells us that the death of Christ was a declaration of the righteousness of God for the forgiveness of sins. And here is the commentary. The mercy seat was sprinkled with blood ; not the blood of bulls or goats, for these could not take away sin, because, in the very nature of things, there could be in them no declaration of the righteousness of God ; and when they were employed, it was only typically, and till the substance should come ;—nor with the blood of the sinner, for thus he could not have found mercy. What, then, was the blood ? It was typical blood under the law. But what is the real blood with which it was sprinkled under the Gospel ? The blood of Christ. “ How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ? ” “ He bare our sins,” says Peter, “ in his own body on the tree.” “ He was wounded,” said Isaiah, “ for our transgressions ; he was bruised

for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him." Upon whom? Upon God's eternal Son, who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven; so that the very relation to God, and the consequent dignity and worth of the sacrifice, become a manifest declaration of God's justice in the forgiveness of sins. Thus we see how the great problem of connecting the maintenance of justice with the exercise of mercy; of forgiving sins, while the righteousness of the law is preserved, and the moral government of God is unrelaxed, has been solved. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation." God governs us from the mercy seat, and therefore is his government a government of grace; but we likewise see all the great ends of righteous government manifested and secured by it. Such a government must maintain the righteous character of the Governor; his hatred of sin, and his determination to punish it: it must be one that powerfully deters from offences, and one that fully upholds the authority of law. •Wherever these three principles unite,—that the righteous character of the Governor is upheld; that men are deterred from offences; that the authority of the law is maintained, and its purity and excellence declared,—there is a righteous government; and such is the government of God, even while he is abundant in mercy, waiteth to be gracious, and is ever ready to forgive. Who can doubt the awful righteousness of his character, when he is seen laying the penalty of sin on his well-beloved Son? Who can take any liberty to sin under a government which holds him condemned already who has not fled for mercy to the appointed refuge? And who sees not that all the authority of the law is upheld, when the great end of the dispensation of grace is, first, to rescue man from its curse, in a way honouring the Divine truth and love; and then, to renew his moral nature, and put him in a condition to obey the law with holy delight from a perfect love to God, to all eternity.

II. But there was not only a connection between the tables of the law and the mercy seat, but over this mercy seat the cherubims of glory were placed. We are therefore instructed in the fact, that there is a harmonious relation between the dispensation of grace to man, and the heavenly world.

Cherubims are placed before us in Scripture under two views. First, they are presented to us as the ministers of the Divine vengeance. Thus, when man was expelled from paradise, cherubim and a flaming sword were placed at the east end of the garden of Eden, to keep the way of the tree of life; the sword turning every way, and thus forbidding all access, and intimating to man that life was no longer to be obtained through the old and broken covenant. But in the tabernacle they appear under other and very different aspects. There were figures of cherubim embroidered on the ark; and there were figures of cherubim carved, and placed on the covering of the mercy seat. In neither case was there a flaming sword; in neither case did they appear to be the messengers of God's vengeance; but, on the contrary, from the very position in which they were placed, hiding the ark with their wings, "shadowing the mercy seat," bending, as if looking down upon it, they are represented as interested spectators of the administration of the grace of God to men, through the atonement and sacrifice of the Saviour.

1. We may, therefore, observe with respect to the angelic powers

of whom the cherubim were the emblems, that they have an intellectual interest in this great subject.

They are of a superior order. The very forms under which they are represented, and which were the symbols of intelligence, strength, courage, and activity, indicate thus much. But here they are brought before us as fixing their intent gaze upon the ark of the covenant. Peter is supposed to refer to this bending attitude when he says, "Which things the angels desire to look into." What things? The things represented by the union of the broken tables of the law, with the propitiatory covering of the ark; the approach of guilty man to God, to God sitting on his throne of grace, where he obtains mercy, and finds grace to help him in time of need. These are the things into which they desire to look. They are great in intellect, no doubt, as they excel in strength. Over the vast fields of science they travel with ease, where man proceeds with so much difficulty. To them the spaces of all nature are open; they can wing their way from world to world, and sweep over the grandeur of creation. They may be permitted to watch the changing scenes of earth, and to mark the entire progress of that vast scheme of providence, "a part, a little part, alone" of which "we scan." But over whatever other sights their view ranges, there is one that fixes their gaze. They fly through the earth, but they rest in the sanctuary. Here they stay their flight, and, with adoring reverence, look into those very peculiarities of the Gospel which to worldly wisdom are foolishness. They look to the broken law covered by the mercy seat sprinkled with blood, the reconciliation of man to God by the death of Christ. This is that manifold wisdom of God,—wisdom developing so many views of the Divine character,—which by the Church is made known to them. And they are right. From this point rays of light spring forth, spreading illumination, and revealing, or casting clearer light upon, all subjects that are brought within their influence. And yet, brethren, they have no direct interest in the subject. They are not fallen creatures; they need no redemption. Let this reprove any of us who, though so deeply interested in these things, have hitherto neglected them. Remember that this is no vain thing; it is your life. You seldom read of these subjects, you seldom meditate on them, you can spare no time to them, you can devote to them no strength; and yet your salvation is bound up in them. And let this especially reprove the pretended wise men of this world, who turn to ridicule, and treat with contempt, the great doctrine of redemption by the incarnation and atonement of Christ. To the Greeks of our own day, as to the Greeks of the apostle's time, all this is foolishness. But let it be observed, that this is especially that part of the Gospel into which the cherubim are continually looking. They are looking at man coming up to the throne of grace, laden with his sins, smiting on his breast, imploring mercy through the Crucified, and bearing away from the throne of mercy the peace and blessing of his reconciled God. The true wisdom of the Gospel, the very depths of its wisdom, are found here. This great doctrine is the key to every other doctrine of the Gospel, as that is the key to all the dispensations of God, whether of providence or of grace.

2. But we may go farther, and say, that we have evidence from Scripture, that the connection of the angelic world with the Christian

system is not one of mere intellectual curiosity and gratification, but likewise of large and important moral benefit.

I think we may fairly infer this from a passage in the epistle to the Ephesians : "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God," Eph. iii, 10. "To the intent," the apostle says. In the administration of grace to man, there is thus a collateral reference to angels ; and the knowledge they thus acquire is of all others most calculated to minister to their holiness. That they need no redemption, we know ; for they have not fallen. It is not, therefore, in the way of direct redemption that this moral benefit flows to them. But I think it is easy to see that if to any being already pure, brighter views of God, more important degrees of moral knowledge, be communicated, such communication of knowledge must always be the instrument of an increase both of holiness and felicity. And I think it is as easy to show that there must necessarily be great subjects with which the angels must become better acquainted than they ever could have been, but for the occurrences and history of our redemption. It is very true, that, when they saw their fellows who had sinned cast down from God and heaven, they had a fearful exhibition of the evil of sin ; but we know they were permitted to approach to the awful mysteries of the garden and the cross ; and by the sufferings of the great victim who suffered and died, that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, still more impressive discoveries of its evil and bitterness would be made to them. They had seen bright and vast displays of the exuberant goodness of God ; but they had never seen love so realized, so embodied, as in the gift of the Son of God for the salvation of man ; as when they saw the great Shepherd following the lost sheep into the wilderness to seek and save them ; as when they saw love teaching, love travelling, love suffering, love agonizing, love dying, that man might not perish. They must have been very deeply impressed with a sense of God's power, when they witnessed the wonders of creation ; when nothing heard the voice of God, and was substantiated into this goodly creation ; and when earth appeared in all its loveliness and perfection, and its Maker pronounced it very good. But here there was nothing to resist ; all was passive in his hands. Angels have now seen the wonders of the new creation, and in them more marvellous proofs of the Divine power. They have seen bad principles subdued and eradicated, alien and resisting hearts won back to God, and sin and uncleanness washed away in the fountain opened on the cross. The virtues which compose holiness they had seen in each other ; and they might know more in the abstract ; but these were rays of brightness in the very element of light : but by the power of grace in man they have seen virtues exhibited and maintained in this corrupt world, as beams of light shining in a dark place. Virtues they have seen in action which otherwise they could only have contemplated in the abstract. Yes ; through that victorious grace, they have seen men fighting against their own nature, and subduing it ; bearing up against the pressure of daily temptation ; forgiving injuries ; sustaining afflictions with patience : they have seen the prisoners for Christ's sake rejoicing in their bonds, and singing, at midnight, the praises of God : they have witnessed the meekness of the martyr, as he prayed for his murderers ; they have

admired his constancy in torments, and the cheerfulness and triumph with which he has welcomed the cross of Christ: and they have glorified God, whose power has rendered creatures so fallen capable of virtues so high and glorious.

It appears exceedingly probable that angels are witnessing the whole history of this world; and that, with reference to their continual instruction. There has been a grand struggle between light and darkness, truth and error, going on from the beginning of time to the present hour, most instructive even to angels. There was a struggle in the case of the angels who kept not their first estate; and those who did keep it, and thus remained faithful, were witnesses of it. But that struggle, I suppose, was very short. The tale might soon be told. For, though we may take our poetry from Milton, yet we are not to take our theology from him. We are not to think there was a great war in heaven; a long contest between light and darkness. Where there is no dispensation of grace, sin is immediately followed by punishment; long suffering belongs not to law. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" and that sentence would have been executed but for the covenant of mercy which comes in as to man. But no doubt, as to angels, they found that the day in which they sinned brought the stroke of Divine vengeance, and they at once sank into the abodes of darkness. The struggle was short, and the lesson soon comprehended. But on earth the struggle is permitted still to continue. And while it goes on, how many important principles are established! how many great truths are receiving fresh evidence every century, every year! how many falsehoods are detected! how many errors dispersed! Who does not see that the whole history of the world goes to the establishment of two points,—the folly as well as the wickedness of rebellion against God, and the wisdom as well as piety of holy submission to him? that, in fact, his service is perfect freedom, and the interest and duty of his creatures are coincident? And as perhaps there is no creature who can so strongly perceive the force of truth, merely regarded in the abstract, as when it is exhibited in action, when presented by experience in the light of actual history: probably angels themselves feel all these truths the more forcibly in consequence of seeing them in action, and in their practical results on the grand theatre of this world. We ourselves may learn something from the awful contest, if we watch it faithfully, standing fast in the light and power of the Lord; but our faculties are too weak, our range of view too limited, our opportunities of observation too few and brief, to permit us to study the lessons presented as they are studied by the cherubim. When we join their assembly we shall share in their advantages. But they, doubtless, watch the progress of the contest with interest. Now the plans of Providence seem involved in perplexity, and now the clouds break, and floods of light are poured upon the scene: and still they gaze as the scheme is gradually and clearly developed, and the catastrophe approaches. What will be their final song, their crowning hallelujah, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, but the burst of that long-repressed and high-wrought feeling which has swelled and struggled even in the vast minds of the cherubim themselves? Wiser, and holier, and safer, must angels part from the scene when the final consummation shall arrive; and the knowledge they have

obtained be found to be a knowledge which shall to all eternity contribute to the happiness of their being.

3. But there is another view in which we may regard the connection between the angelic world and the Church : they are angels and ministers ; ministers to the Church, and ministers to individuals.

Though, indeed, we know not in what particulars, or in what modes, they are, thus ministers, yet it is a delightful doctrine. It seems to be comprehended in that saying of Paul, that all things are reconciled, and made one in Christ. We have said that the cherubim are represented as the ministers of God's vengeance, and as turning their flaming sword in the east gate of the garden of Eden against guilty man ; but in grace, the sword is quenched, and we see them only as ministers to them who shall be heirs of salvation. It is delightful to feel the communion of saints on earth. It is still more delightful to feel the benefits of a dispensation which embraces all the saints, as well those of our own immediate and personal acquaintance, as all who love our Lord Jesus in every part of the earth. It heightens this idea when we can connect the Church below with the Church above, and recollect that to us all, as the apostle tells us, there is one God and Father of all. He is the Lord of hosts. He has a host in the innumerable company of angels. He has a host in the company of redeemed men. Part of that host have crossed the flood, and part are crossing now, and part are travelling through the wilderness ; but they are one sacramental host, one Israel of God ; and they are going up by their companies from strength to strength, till they all appear before God in Zion. And this feeling of union with the saints glorified,—not only with those whom we have loved on earth, and whose triumph over death we have witnessed, but with all who have ever passed from this world,—I say, this feeling and thought are heightened when we connect them with the angels of God. There they are one with the saints, all one in Christ, all gathered up in him as the Head : so that in heaven we have nothing but friends. The holy places are reconciled. That is a very striking part of the Mosaic economy where there was atonement made for the holy place ; and the holy place and the worshippers were to be reconciled, as well as the God they worshipped and the worshippers. The holy place was to be reconciled, to show that there is a repulsion between heaven and sinners, between angels and sinners, the removal of which is an effect of the death of Christ, reconciling all. So that, when we are disembodied, and leave this world, and go into another, we go into a friendly heaven, and find there our family and our home.

And then there is their ministry as to individuals. I have said we know not how they minister ; yet it is a delightful thought, that we may be, personally, the subjects of their care. We ought always to recollect, indeed, that it is our first and most glorious privilege to be under the influences of God the Spirit ; and yet he may occasionally make use of angelic as well as human agency, to accomplish his purposes of grace. There may be something in what Bishop Kenn says,

“ Let thy bless'd angels, while I sleep,
Around my bed their vigils keep.”

God himself is the friend of those who are reconciled to him through Jesus Christ ; and all his agents, whether angels or men, are ministers

to do them good. "All things work together for good to them that love God."

III. Finally, there was the presence of God crowning the whole.

In the sanctuary you have not only the ark of the covenant, the tables of the law, the mercy seat, and the cherubim shadowing it, but the visible symbol of the Divine presence. God was there. And thus are we shown that all things are of him, and by him, and for him. The tables of the law declare his will; the covenant sprang from his everlasting wisdom and love; the mercy seat was his throne; the cherubim were his servants; the holiest of all was his "resting place," 2 Chron. vi, 41. The people came to worship him, and were dismissed with his blessing. As creation itself is from the will of God, so is redemption. All is the result of his benevolence. The whole plan of mercy sprang from the depths of his eternal love, and all its arrangements were fixed according to the treasures of his own knowledge and wisdom. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."

This indicates, too, the necessity of Divine agency. As he originated the whole scheme of redemption, so must he be present with it to give it power and efficacy. This was felt under the law. The psalmist prayed, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth, stir up thy strength, and save us." It is only when he has "arisen into his rest, he and the ark of his strength," that "his priests are clothed with salvation, and his saints shout aloud for joy." The whole practical part of Christianity, if I may so speak, is imperfect, but as God is present with it. Though the atonement has been made; though a perfect revelation has been given; though the Sabbaths and ordinances of God have been established; yet, as the most beautiful arrangements of the temple would have been insufficient without the cloud of the Divine presence, so, unless God be especially present, even with Christianity, it cannot profit. If there be light in the soul, it is because "God that caused the light to shine out of darkness hath shined into the heart." Is there repentance? "God hath granted repentance unto life." Is there pardon? The court is held, the confession is received, the pleading of the Advocate is admitted, and the absolving sentence is passed by God himself. "It is God that justifieth." And if the heart has peace, it is because the love of God is shed abroad there by the Holy Ghost. Are we new creatures? It is because "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

The whole points out the everlasting presence of God with his Church. "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." All blessings come from this: "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." And this is the joyful hope of the people of God, that ere long they shall be "absent from the body, and present with the Lord." They dwell already in the outer courts; but they are waiting till they shall be permitted to pass

“within the vail, whither the Forerunner is for them entered.”—There God himself shall be with them, and be their God for ever and ever.

SERMON XCVII.—*Christ the Wisdom of Believers.*

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom,” (Or, who is made unto us, σοφία ἀπὸ Θεοῦ, wisdom from God,) 1 Cor. i. 30.

THE only basis on which religion can rest is religious truth; and where that is wanting, it must degenerate into infidelity, on the one hand, or superstition on the other. The religious history of mankind is in direct proof of this. Among the ancients, the wise men were either atheistic or skeptical; and the ignorant plunged into the grossest follies of the popular faith. The same process takes place among ourselves, whenever the truth which we have is either neglected or hidden. They who affect religious inquiry, without resorting to the aid of the Scriptures, become infidel in various degrees; and the ignorant convert religion into ceremony, to which they attach a superstitious efficacy, and make it a substitute for holiness. There is a necessary connection between instruction and salvation. It is so appointed by God; and his order cannot be violated with impunity.

It was therefore to be expected, that the perfect dispensation of the mercy of God to man, in Christ, which is embodied in the Gospel, as it was designed to exert the most effectual moral control over the heart and the conduct, and to supersede a religion of hollow and powerless ceremony, by the substantial principles of love to God and man, and practical obedience to the Divine law, should be distinguished by the clearness, authority, and number of its revelations, as much as by its mercy and purity; and that, just in proportion to its merciful and restoring object and character, it should be a religion of instruction, conviction, and motive.

This is precisely the fact; and the Christ who is made of God unto us “righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,” is made unto us “wisdom.” On this topic the apostle delightfully dwells in this chapter. The Gentile Corinthians boasted of their wisdom; but it was the wisdom of this world, and by it the world knew not God. They had to boast of their eloquent declaimers and subtle reasoners; but while they taught, argued, and declaimed, the population around them sunk lower and yet lower into every vice. But of what had Christian Corinthians to boast? Of a wisdom of God, which taught them God: and of a preaching of the cross, which saved from guilt, sin, and misery, all that believed. Ye are not, says he, in this or the other school of vain philosophy; ye have left the wise men after the flesh; “but of God,” that is, of his mercy and power, “ye are in Christ Jesus,” in the fellowship of his disciples and family, “who of God is made unto us wisdom,” and truly so; as well as “righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

It is to the first branch only of this interesting passage, that we shall at present direct our attention. What are the great principles of that

wisdom which we are taught by Christ? And what is its connection with our personal salvation?

I. Christ is made unto us wisdom, because of those new and illustrious revelations which he has given to us of God.

There never was a period when there was not the knowledge of God in the world. That knowledge was not discovered by reason; nor did the reason of man ever improve upon it. All the reasonings of man, because they were influenced by a corrupt heart, darkened this truth, that there is a God, till, when the Gospel was announced, if his existence was admitted, men were ignorant of his attributes; and Athens herself subverted her own claim to superior wisdom, by publicly acknowledging her ignorance of that which it most concerned her to know. She wrote upon one of her altars, "TO GOD UNKNOWN;" nor could the mystery be pierced by any of her own sages. It was a disciple of Christ, one to whom Christ had been made wisdom, who stood on Mars' Hill, and cried, "Him declare I unto you." How humbled in that moment appears the wisdom of this world! How exalted the wisdom of Christ!

Christ is the great Teacher of God, in two modes: by declaration, and by action.

1. By declaration.

In the course of his ministrations he did not reason concerning God; which, indeed, would not have become Him who lay in the bosom of the Father. "No man hath seen God at any time." Man, therefore, must darkly reason, and doubtfully infer. "The only-begotten Son, who lay in the bosom of the Father," who was with God, and who was God, neither acquired nor made known this knowledge in that way. "He hath declared him." An instance of this declaratory mode of teaching we have in his conversation with the Samaritan woman. I call your attention to this case, because a single instance, when well considered, is more impressive than a slight glance at many.

She puts the question, whether in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim God were more acceptably worshipped. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," John iv, 21-24.

Here we learn that God is a spirit; that he is in every place alike; that he condescends to be the object of our worship; that he is not pleased with mere ceremonies, but must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, calling the soul into this high and holy exercise, that he may exalt and ennoble it. And as the worship, both at Jerusalem and upon Mount Gerizim, was by sacrifice, we are farther taught, that guilty man may approach God through the sacrifice which he hath appointed; that God becomes the Father of such, and so delights in intercourse with them; for "the Father seeketh such to worship him."

What instruction is here! What a contrast to the teachings of men! This was saying, in the darkness of the world which knew not God, "Let there be light: and there was light."

2. Christ was the teacher of the knowledge of God by action.

In his life he was the visible image of God's purity ; in his works, of God's power ; in his condescending compassion, of God's yearning goodness ; in the freeness of his gifts, of God's abundant grace and liberality ; in his intercourse with his disciples, of God's regard for pious, humble souls ; in his denunciations of judgment, of God's justice ; and in his death, the brightest and most awful demonstration was given of his holiness, justice, and love united. There they were proclaimed, tacitly, we grant, in solemn and, for a time, mysterious action ; but as the mystery was cleared away by the resurrection, with an emphasis which has struck the moral too deep to be ever obliterated, angels and men have felt that God is just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly ; a just God, and yet a Saviour.

II. Christ has become to us wisdom, by the views which he has given us of the moral condition of man.

If I wished for information, as to the physical nature of man, I could only learn it from Christ, that man is an image of God ; and that he has, like God, an immortal nature.

If I wanted information, as to his moral history, here only could I learn that God made man upright ; and here only could I find the means of reconciling the two apparently contradictory facts, that God can make nothing evil ; and yet that here is a race of creatures, the thoughts and imaginations of whose hearts are only evil, and that continually.

But these are not the points on which I would dwell.

There are points in the moral condition of man which have been darkly seen in all ages, and obscurely, but substantially confessed, on which Christ has eminently become our wisdom. These are our sinfulness, helplessness, and danger ; with some idea of hope, which every where, and in all ages, has prevailed.

The sinfulness, helplessness, and danger of mankind have all of them been acknowledged and felt ; but in what new and awful views are they placed by Christ ! I lead you to his last passion, and ask the reason of his sufferings ; and the only reason which can be given is, that they were severe, because sin was exceeding sinful, and the soul of man exposed to a tremendous danger. The reason could not be in God. His Son was beloved too much to be thus bruised, except for some most important and ulterior object. The reason could not be in the malice of the Jews, or the power of the Romans ; for he could have prayed his Father, and "a legion of angels" would have been sent to his rescue. The reason lay in the moral condition of men ; and here we learn what that moral condition was. And let me remark that this is a first and leading truth. Sin is not a trifle. See the proof of this in the sorrows of thy Saviour. It is not in man to make atonement for sin. Behold, the victim which God appointed was both God and man. The danger is not one that is evitable by human means ; or means so strange, so peculiarly Divine, would not have been employed. The punishment of sin is not light. If the substitute so suffered, what must the principal suffer, should he reject his Saviour ? He must suffer pain of body, indicated by the tortures of the cross ;—pain of spirit, indicated by a "soul sorrowing even unto death ;"—desertion by God,—*"Why hast thou forsaken me ?"*—and this, in the case of the

finally lost, exasperated by the sense of guilt, which silences complaint, and by an eternity, which excludes all hope.

But O the adorable mercy of our God in Christ ! In proportion to this affecting and terrible display of the guilt and danger of man is the glory of that bright hope, the rays of which play around the cross, and shine to the ends of the earth. By the sufferings of Christ justice was satisfied, and God reconciled to man ; and this light is thrown upon our condition, that, sinful, helpless, and endangered as it is, we are all invited to obtain mercy. The blood which was shed on earth speaks in heaven. In Him whom our sins crucified we have an everlasting Advocate. The way into the holiest is opened and consecrated ; and whosoever draws near, with penitence and faith, deeply as his agonized heart may sigh, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord," and, "God be merciful to me a sinner," shall go down to his house freely justified. To Christ we owe this wisdom ; and, indeed, where else could I obtain it ? The wisdom of this world sends me to the book of nature. I go ; but there I see contrary perfections and operations. I see light and darkness, sunshine and storm ; a God who gives life, and takes it away ; a flow of goodness, and an infliction of severity. If I hope in one view, I am plunged into terror on the other. Pharisaism sends me to the law, and bids me obey. Ah ! but "when I would do good, evil is present with me ;" and should I please myself with a fancied perfection of obedience for the moment, "my past iniquities take hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up." I bless, then, the wisdom of Christ. The difficulty is removed ; the debt is cancelled ; justice is satisfied ; I believe, accept, and rejoice in "the righteousness which is of God by faith."

III. Christ is made unto us wisdom, in the discoveries he has made of the nature, extent, and possibility of holiness.

To this subject how little of the attention of the world has been directed ; and yet is there a subject worthy of a consideration so deep ? The foulest blot in creation is an unholy spirit. The brightest, the loveliest idea that can enter the human mind is that of moral order, and the purity of the heart. Were all nature reduced to order, and all the arrangements of society conformed to justice and truth ; were a world of men recovered to God, and paradise restored, and but one unholy spirit remained ; it would be disconnected in principle and feeling from every thing in nature, and every thing in society ; and in these circumstances it would be seen how low sin prostrates the spirit, how bitterly it rankles in the disorder of the affections. Amidst the universal harmony, that string would not vibrate ; amidst the universal communion of saints, that heart would be solitary and restless ; and that countenance, like Cain's, would be fallen. The joy of others would be its pains ; the sanctified employments of men, irksome. Every word and every example would be a reproof ; and could the company of hell be enjoyed without their tortures, even hell would be sought as a refuge from a world full of saints, and full of God.

If the state of one unholy man in a recovered world would afford a striking exemplification of the principle of sin, the habits and feelings of an individual in a world where the majority are alienated from God, and only a few love him, or are like him, exemplifies the principle of holiness. The holy human spirit is solitary, indeed, as to men, like

Noah in the old world, and Lot in Sodom. Rivers of water run down his eyes because men keep not God's law. He can have no communion with the works of darkness, but rather reproveth them. Yet we see with what he has communion. Hears he of a few who fear the Lord, and speak often one to another? With them he casts his lot. Does a song of praise ascend, amidst the blasphemies of men, in honour of God? In that chorus his voice is heard. Are there works of piety and charity projected amidst universal selfishness, or destructive agencies? He is in their plan, or execution. Were he shut out from all these; were he truly, what Elijah fancied himself, left alone of all the worshippers of God; he would seek and find communion with his God, and be satisfied. His spirit would seek whatever was pure amidst the general pollution. From the crimes of men he would fly to the dispensations of Providence, and sing of judgment and mercy. From the works of man, stained with his iniquities, he would fly to the works of God, and hold converse with every object of nature which could remind him of the wisdom and goodness of God. He would seek God, and find him, in the sanctuary of his own hallowed thoughts, and walk and converse with the Invisible.

Of principles so much in contrast need I ask you which you prefer? And need I say that the wisdom which teaches how the principle of holiness may be implanted and matured, is wisdom in a sense the most emphatic?

Christ is made unto us this wisdom. The nature of real holiness is explained to us by him. It is not a ceremonial holiness,—the mistake of superstition. It is not merely a regulation of the heart and conduct, as to ourselves and others,—the mistake of philosophers. It is not a sentimental approval of what is fair and good,—the mistake of men of imagination. It is the conversion of the heart to God; the regeneration of the whole nature; the renewal of the primitive image of God in man. This is its nature. Its rule is the glorious ideal, so to speak, contained in every precept of the Gospel, in every grace it inculcates, in every promise it exhibits. There is the model; and to that we are to be conformed, until the whole lives and is embodied in our spirit and conduct.

The possibility of this is explained by Jesus Christ. Without hope there could be no effort. The lowest views of heathen virtue were above human attainment, because man was left to work it out by himself. The tale of bricks was exacted without the straw; and the teachers of morals expected grapes from thorns, and figs of thistles. The agency exhibited by Christ in the accomplishment of our sanctification, is equal to the effect. With man, it is allowed, the entire renewal of our nature is impossible; but with God all things are possible. To him our hope is turned. His Spirit is the sanctifier; and the whole process of our consecration to God is the mighty working of the Holy Ghost, with the means which he has appointed in order to that end.

IV. If we now turn our thoughts from our own personal experience to subjects more general, though still such that we have a constant personal interest in them, we may observe that Christ is made unto us wisdom, because of that revelation which he has made of the principles on which that world of which we form a part is governed.

That the world is under government, is a dictate of the clearest

reason. The world of matter is governed. This is as easily demonstrated, as that it was created. Its regularities and irregularities equally prove it. Blind and insensible matter cannot be a law to itself; and if it is under law, that law is the will and power of a governing mind. But is every element directed and controlled? Does a mighty energy grasp and order every atom? and is man, intelligent and immortal man, for whom this world itself was made, left at large, the sport of chance, or the prey of his own perverseness? To no proposition does the mind more readily assent, than to this,—that He who made us must govern us: and if there was a proposed end in creation, that end must be secured by superintendence. But who knows that end, and the means by which it is all along promoted? Not any. Such an end supposes revelation; and by revelation, the revelation of Christ, it is made known.

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SERMON XCVIII.—*The Redemption of Time.*

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil,” Eph. v, 16.

It is scarcely possible for a reflecting person to suffer the last Sabbath in the year to close without endeavouring, from this circumstance, to direct his thoughts to the close of human life, when no more Sabbaths will be enjoyed. This last Sabbath of the year reminds us, too, of the approaching termination of one of the great divisions of human life. We can scarcely part with any of these periods without reflections every way tending to sober the mind.

There is one folly of which we are frequently guilty: we are apt to be afflicted at the loss of large periods of time, but we suffer the smaller ones, of which they are composed, to escape without notice. We cannot part with a year without regret, but we throw away days, and weeks, and months, with composure. This is a fault; it results from want of reflection. It is as certain that every minute is reducing the span of life, as that every year is reducing it. We ought to be more particularly attentive to these smaller portions of time: for want of this attention, years pass away, perhaps life itself, without notice. Mere common-place reflections, however, upon the rapidity with which time is leaving us, will effect but little for us unless they produce firm and solemn resolution as to our future conduct. To redeem time is to apply life to those purposes for which it was given; when it is not so employed, it lays a foundation for eternal and remediless ruin. Nor does this duty merely arise from the consideration that life is very limited, that but a short duration is allotted to us in this present state; for had we the age of Methuselah to revel in, there would be the same obligation on us to redeem the time; nay, even if we were in eternity, there would be the same obligation to spend every successive portion of our existence in the best possible manner. An eternity of trifling would be but an eternity of weariness and vexation; if eternity were spent in sin, it would be an eternity of continually increasing misery. It is not merely because we have only a short time to live, that we are called upon wisely to redeem the time, but because our best interests

are all bound up with the duty. He who redeems the time, presses it into his own personal service, and extracts from it blessings that shall endure for ever.

Let us now consider,

I. The subject of the exhortation, "time."

II. The duty enjoined on us, "redeeming the time."

III. The reason by which it is enforced, "the days are evil."

I. The subject of the exhortation, "time."

This is what is to be redeemed. The word "time" sometimes signifies the whole duration assigned to the present world: so long as the world exists, so long is there time; but the period shall come when the great angel shall descend from heaven and pronounce the solemn oath that, "time shall be no longer." This is an important period. All the plans of God's providence are to be transacted in this world; and man finds here his state of probation; from this we must all soon pass: and so shall it be with other generations in successive ages; all shall go into an eternal state, in which their unalterable condition shall be determined by their conduct in time.

The apostle, however, does not in this place use the word in so extensive a sense. Time sometimes signifies the period of human life; as long as we are in the present world, we are said to be in time; as when life ends, we are said to be in eternity: the reason is, that the time which we occupy in the present state is that which God allots for our personal probation and trial. All God's dispensations in respect to us, whether of providence or grace, refer to this period, and have their limits fixed by it. This suggests a most important thought, that, in this respect, there is not an action we perform in our present probationary state, but has some reference to eternity, but will, in some measure, contribute to our eternal joy, or our eternal pain. In the epistle to the Galatians, the apostle tells us, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap:" an impressive figure of speech, by which he represents the present life as the ground; and the actions of men, whether good or bad, as the seed; the harvest of which shall be reaped in eternity. We, perhaps, forget our actions, but we shall meet them once again; we shall meet them all before the throne of God; there, in the full light of his countenance, shall they all start into new existence, and either claim, through the covenant of mercy in Christ, the condescending and free rewards of grace, or demand the proper punishment of sin,—utter and endless woe.

But there is yet another sense of the word "time," and it is that in which it seems to be specially used by the apostle in the text; it means "season," or "opportunity:" "Redeeming the opportunity, because the days are evil;" all the opportunity, that is, which God bestows upon us, for getting and doing good, for acquainting ourselves with him, and being at peace. And these opportunities are either general or special.

I. General, with respect to the religious advantages which we all enjoy.

Ours is the day of salvation; ours the best and most favourable opportunity for acquiring the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. The heathens have not such a day of opportunity as we have; under whatever kind of rule or dispensation they live, they possess not the advantages which we so abundantly enjoy. We have the clear light of truth, and, with

that, those spiritual influences which accompany the faithful ministrations of the Gospel. Even in our own country many have not the opportunities which we enjoy : living, it may be, in obscure and retired places, they have not the ordinances of religion in that abundance in which we possess them. They to whom the apostle addressed the exhortation had these general advantages and opportunities ; and because we possess them, the same exhortation must be urged on our consciences, "Redeeming the time."

2. But our opportunity may be considered special, as well as general.

The Gospel is never preached without an accompanying effusion of the Spirit ; but still "the wind bloweth where it listeth." There is much sovereignty in the dispensations of the Spirit ; there are times and seasons when his influences are more powerful, more striking in their evidences and results ; times when "the Spirit is poured out," like the copious shower, "from on high." Sometimes the Church is thus specially visited, sometimes individuals : but whether general or special, the opportunity is to be redeemed.

II. Consider the exhortation itself, "Redeeming the time," or opportunity.

The expression is metaphorical : the apostle alludes to the customs of trade by which goods are exposed for sale by some, and purchased by others ; there is sometimes a danger of neglecting the best opportunities of purchasing ; in such cases either the goods are bought up by others, or advanced in price, and we are thus put to some inconvenience, because we did not embrace the opportunity before it passed away from us. This seems to be the idea which the apostle intended to present : now you have the opportunity of obtaining much spiritual good, of securing your everlasting salvation ; see that you do not let it pass unimproved ; get from it all it is intended to afford ; redeem the time ; buy up the opportunity.

Let us consider, then, by what means we may observe this important exhortation ; how we may avail ourselves of our opportunities, and so redeem the time.

1. We redeem time by consideration.

An inconsiderate man must always lose his time, because he lives for no particular end ; for want of thought, he cannot employ the best means for the accomplishment of any end which may occasionally strike him as being desirable. If religion does any thing for us, it will make us considerate ; we shall consider the great ends of life, and the means by which we are to accomplish them. This habit of consideration—of looking to our goings, of walking circumspectly—is one of the best and most effectual methods of redeeming time : they who live considerately do not live at random ; days, months, and years will not escape us without leaving some impression which shall be to our ultimate advantage. We sink below the character of man, rational, accountable, and immortal man, if we live without the habit of consideration, which is at the root of all true religion.

2. We redeem time when we turn every thing we have to do, in the common concerns of life, into a religious channel.

There are those, I know, who suppose the various occupations of life to be incompatible with the spirit of religion in the great work of salvation : such persons are continually entangled with the affairs of

this life, because they never seek to sanctify them by referring, in all their transactions, to the great ends for which God sent us into the world. If a man's calling be lawful, and he transact the affairs of that calling lawfully, if he wish to glorify God in all things, and continually to act as in the Divine presence, then will he be enabled, while he is not slothful in business, to continue serving the Lord. Whatever is incompatible with this union of business and devotion, ought to be given up; and, the fact is, that when we regard our proper and lawful calling as appointed by God, and do all to his glory which it requires from us, we shall find even the affairs of this life exerting a religious influence on our minds: we shall thus be "redeeming the time," because we shall be employing it in reference to eternity.

3. We redeem time by living in a devotional spirit.

And that for two reasons. First: this will cast out every thing trifling, much more every thing sinful, from our leisure hours. We have learned a very important lesson, when we have learned to spend our leisure time well. It is from the loose and dissipated manner in which that portion of time is often spent which may be spared from the occupations of life, that so much evil is introduced into the heart. This continually weakens the religious tone of the spirit, destroys union with God, and thus separates the soul from the fountain of life. But when we learn to spend this portion of our time profitably, giving part of it to useful reading, part to an attendance on the various means of grace, then are we redeeming the time; we avail ourselves of it, and turn it to our own advantage. But a devotional spirit will do more than this; for, secondly, its preservation and exercise are perfectly compatible with the affairs of life. If we have leisure for sinful thoughts and trifles,—and who does not complain of these?—then are there some openings when secret desires and prayers may be offered up. Of these a devotional spirit will habitually avail itself. Thus shall we learn the holy art of separation from the world, while yet in the midst of it. We shall be able to be

"Midst busy multitudes, alone."

The time will thus be redeemed by the profitable occupation of its numerous interstices.

4. We must not forget, that, in the meaning of the apostle, the principal way by which time is to be redeemed is, not merely by making efforts to promote our final blessedness, but by actually securing our present salvation.

No man can be said to redeem time, if he does not avail himself of the opportunities which the Gospel presents of obtaining forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified. Nothing can be considered as an advantage, if separated from the actual and present deliverance of the soul from darkness, and guilt, and sin. If we have not this, though we retain all beside, we are poor and wretched indeed. Even in this sense, "what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" In the full sense of the words, then, our time is redeemed, we avail ourselves of the opportunity, when we come as sinful creatures to our Lord Jesus Christ for his mercy; when, receiving his salvation, we yield ourselves to him, and so walk in him, that the work of grace may be carried on and completed in our hearts.

III. We have now to consider the motives by which the apostle enforces the exhortation : "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

They are evil, first, in a general sense. We often use the phrase in reference to our own times ; and, unhappily, its correctness cannot be denied. This age, as well as the age of the apostles, though not in the same sense, is a wicked one. We are surrounded with wicked men. We find, notwithstanding all the improvements in society, a general forgetfulness of God ; and not only that, but very much contempt of his word and commandments. Vices of the most aggravated character pollute society. Whatever the generality of men may think, or however they may act, yet is this consideration a very forcible one. We ought to redeem the time, because the days are evil. In proportion as others are unrighteous and evil, it becomes the Christian to be "good, and upright in heart." Our Lord has said that when "iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold ;" but this is no necessary consequence. It becomes those who see, and who profess to deplore, the sad effects of sin ; who see that because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the hearts of men are set in them to do evil ; it becomes them, under such circumstances, more diligently to apply themselves, first, to secure the salvation of their own souls, and then, so to let their light shine before men, that others may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven. "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Secondly, the days are thus generally evil, because they are days of distress ; and this view of them will show the duty to be incumbent on us. It were well, indeed, if men generally were impressed with this important truth, that seasons of afflictions are calls from God for humiliation and repentance. But that is not the case. The gloomy aspect of the present time is referred to second causes alone. God and his providence are left out of the account. What man can wonder at the present affliction and distress, who reflects upon this, that when we enjoyed national prosperity, it was employed to purposes of luxury and sin ? He who believes that the sins of a people always separate between them and God, so that he will not hear their prayer, will not be surprised when he sees sin followed by punishment ; and he will refer that punishment to its proper cause. No man that properly respects the authority of the word of God can possibly ascribe national distress to the mere operation of second causes, to man only. There is nothing which more completely prevents persons from seeing the hand of God in his judgments, and deriving benefit from them, than this habit of laying their distress upon the faults of others. In times of distress, there may be a multitude of good people who suffer ; but, generally speaking, there is not a misery which comes upon a nation, but it is the result of general transgression. When men get into the habit of saying, "This should be done," or, "That should be done ;" "This person should be put out of office ;" "That person should be put in ;" nothing half so much as this habit shuts out God from the world. "Lord," says the prophet, "when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see : but they shall see." If they will not see his hand in lighter afflictions, they shall see it in heavier. Therefore, because the days are evil, because there is so much distress in the land, we are called

to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God ; to return unto him, seeking, that we may find his mercy and favour.

And this may be applied individually. The days are evil, in the sense of affliction, to a number of individuals ; and it is written, " In the day of adversity consider." It is too frequently the case, that the various trials of the present life serve only to separate man from God : under these trying dispensations, some persons who have a degree of piety lose their faith in God, and do not possess their souls in patience. In a state of sorrow and difficulty we have more need of God. It is possible for us, by redeeming the time, to have our cause committed into his hands, and to bring his special interposition into action on our behalf ; at any rate, we then employ our time to the best and most useful purposes when we are seeking to learn, from even affliction, the important moral lessons which it teaches. God will not leave the righteous man without his presence and blessing ; if you call upon him in the day of trouble, he will deliver you, and you shall glorify him.

There is another sense in which the days are evil. The apostle calls the whole Christian warfare, " the evil day : " " That ye may withstand in the evil day." Throughout life it is an evil day in this respect, that we are ever exposed to enemies and temptations ; and the circumstance, that we are thus situated, is one of the loudest calls possible to prayer and watchfulness, to the entire devotion of ourselves to God, making him the end of all our actions, that his wisdom may enlighten us, and his grace give us the final victory over all our enemies. Because the days are thus evil, because we must press through all opposition, surmount all difficulties, and pass close by the gates of hell to heaven, let us be careful to redeem the time.

That the days are evil may be impressed on you by two or three additional considerations. In the figurative manner of speaking employed by the apostle, we have already observed, there is an allusion to persons who lose, through negligence, the opportunity of securing an advantageous purchase : the apostle makes the allusion to engage us to an instant use of all the opportunities God has bestowed upon us. In the human mind there is a continual inclination to delay ; and let it be observed, that every day we live in the spirit of the world that inclination is increased ; every day we spend under the influence of sin serves to render our habits more stubborn and confirmed ; every day that we have resisted the Spirit of God, we have acquired additional hardness, and thus we present an increasing resistance to the Divine influence. There is a solemnity which a person loses when he comes to trifle with God, with Divine calls, and religious opportunities ; if salvation is attained afterward, it is attained with greater difficulty ; the repentance is more deep and painful ; the struggle is more powerful ; and there is the increased probability of failure, and therefore the diminished probability of ultimate success. Nor does this apply merely to persons who are first seeking the Lord ; it applies to Christian believers throughout every stage of their experience. Opportunities of constant improvement are afforded ; and the neglect of such opportunities, and consequently of the improvement itself, can never exist without some retrograde movement ; the mind becomes weaker in its resistance to evil ; the same quantity of Divine influence,

so to speak, does not produce the same effect. Where there is a habit of trifling, the Holy Spirit of God is grieved. Instead of running the way of God's commandments without weariness, the trifler makes but a slow and tardy progress; and this renders ultimate success extremely hazardous. The final blessing, the crown of righteousness, is exhibited, and we have the opportunity of securing it; but, instead of promptly availing ourselves, we calculate upon its continuance, and allow ourselves to neglect it. We may not set limits to the mercy of God; it is not for us to say when the forbearance of mercy ceases, and when judgment begins. There seems to be a great variety in God's dealings with men; but no man may presume that the Lord will delay his coming to call the servant to account because, through carelessness and sloth, the servant is not prepared to render it. We put our salvation in hazard when we neglect those opportunities which God has given to us, not to be trifled with, but that we may secure by them the most valuable ends. Hear what the apostle says: "We, receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, and with godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." Never forget that part of his character. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling: the least disposition to trifling and delay should be most carefully guarded against; for it is that which puts the salvation of our immortal spirits in hazard and danger.

Finally. The time will come when, as to many unhappy spirits, the opportunity will be lost for ever. "To-day, therefore, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" if the heart be hardened, if the soul be steeled against God, if trifles occupy our attention, to the exclusion of things of everlasting moment, if thus you are neglecting the opportunity, I say not that you will never repent, never find mercy; but, even on the most favourable view of the case, bitter will be your regrets, heavy your self-condemnation: the recollection of time lost, never to be recalled,—opportunities neglected, never to be again possessed,—will sting you to the soul. "Harden not your hearts;" but remember, the case may be otherwise: there are many who, when they go to buy, shall find no oil; God has removed it from the market. Recollect the parable of the foolish virgins: when the midnight cry arose, they went to the wise to beg, but these had none to spare; they went to those that sold, but while they went, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and then the door was shut. Redeem, then, the opportunity while you have it; and let the consideration of the rapid flight of time, and, as to you, its short duration, induce you, without delay, to flee to the refuge set before you; to secure your best interests by faith in Christ; and, having done this, to take care that all your future days, whether they be many or few, be entirely devoted to him, and spent in working out your own salvation.

SERMON XCIX.—*The Remedy of the World's Misery.*

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nations, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this,” Isaiah ix, 2-7.

WERE we altogether unacquainted with the Scriptures of the New Testament, we could not carefully read the writings of the Jewish prophets without being convinced that many parts of them have more than a temporary and local interest; and that they repose upon events, not only interesting to the seed of Abraham, but to every nation and kindred under heaven. We should discover, even without the comment of evangelists and apostles, that the hopes of all the prophets rested upon the advent of one glorious personage: that he was to be truly a man like themselves; but to be also distinguished from all men, both by his office of universal Sovereign, which he was to fill with a pomp of circumstance, and a graciousness of administration, which no earthly monarch ever exhibited, but also by attributes of natural and moral perfection which would equal him with God. And it could not fail to strike us, that so completely was the appearance of this singular personage the great *end* of all their hopes and anxieties, that from the moment they behold, in the spirit of prophecy, the dawning of the long-expected day, they dismiss all those fears and griefs which the apostasies of their own people, and the wretched state of the heathen nations, had excited; and considering the great Restorer of all things as entered upon his office, they look with confidence to the most glorious results. Then their holy ardour kindles; then the page of prophecy brightens and burns as they dictate it; and with shouts of admiration, praise, and triumph, they attend on the promised Redeemer, as he proceeds to the successful execution of his purposes, and the salvation of the world.

All this would be discovered in the writings of the prophets, had we not the New Testament; and all this was discovered in them by the pious Jews. But with the facts of the New Testament, the glorious but general prospects of the prophets assume, at least in part, a more defined and particular appearance. We can tell who this Messiah is; we have seen him ourselves; we have traced the history of his humiliation and glory; we have seen his kingdom set up, and the prediction in part verified. Still, however, we are not arrived at that period when the book of prophecy is of no farther service to us; when accomplishment has, in a sense, converted prophecy into fact. Much remains to be accomplished; and we are still, to a great extent, in the case of

the ancient Jews, who "saw the promises afar off;" but like them, too, we are "persuaded of them, and embrace them." We have stronger reasons for our faith; because much of what was prophecy to them has become history to us; and we have better means of conceiving of those predictions which are unfulfilled, because we have a greater number of facts, and a wider range of analogy, from which to reason.

The prophecies contained in the text are of a mixed kind; they are partly fulfilled, and partly unfulfilled. We have the authority of the Evangelist St. Matthew to apply the passage to Gospel times, and to prevent it from being restricted to the Jews; for he who is "the glory of his people Israel" is the "light to lighten the Gentiles," Luke i, 79; ii, 32.

The text is evidently too copious to allow of the discussion of all the important points which it presents to our notice; but it will furnish us with considerations suited to the present missionary occasion. Let us,

I. Consider the view taken by the prophet of the moral state of the world previous to the glorious change which makes the subject of his prophecy.

1. The people are represented as walking in darkness.

The Holy Spirit, who spoke by the prophet, could not mean the Jews only; though they are included in this description; for they, though comparatively in darkness, had such a degree of light as would warrant the use of terms so strong, if they only had been intended. The prophet contemplates the world at large; and as the nations of the earth pass in succession before him, in those pictures which the inspiring Spirit figured on his imagination, he beholds them enveloped in darkness, and walking amidst the dangers and horrors of death.

Light is an emblem of knowledge. Darkness is an emblem of ignorance and error; and an emblem the most striking. As the pall of darkness is drawn over the world, the fair face of nature fades from the sight; every object becomes indistinct, or is wholly obscured; and all that can cheer the sight or direct the steps of man vanishes: so the gradual accumulation of religious errors, thickening with every age, banished the knowledge of God and his truth from the understandings of men, till all that was sublime in speculation, cheering to the heart, supporting to the hopes, or directive to the actions of men, passed away from the soul, and left the intellectual world like that of nature when deprived of light. The heaven of the soul was hung with blackness, and "their foolish heart was darkened."

Were the truths of religion less operative and practical, as matters of inferior moment, and affecting temporal interests only, we should nevertheless lament their loss to any portion of our fellow men. Society without those truths which have the greatest certainty, which from the noblest subject of contemplation, and give an elevation and grandeur to the intellectual character, which form the taste, soften the manners, and rear up the social polity of nations, must be considered as sustaining a great and incalculable loss. But this is a trifling consideration in comparison of others. Truth in doctrine is, by an essential and necessary bond, connected with religion in practice; with all that we mean by that word in the heart, and in the life; in our relations to God, and to eternity. We who see around us more light than men choose

to walk by, are apt to think too lightly of the connection which subsists between knowledge and practice; and because we see them partially unconnected in some, we think they are wholly so in the majority. But this is a false notion. Religious knowledge is always to some extent operative; but where it does not exist, no morality, no piety can exist. This is an awful thought. We sometimes coolly say that heathen nations are ignorant; but have we thought how much that implies? They know not God; and what is the practical consequence? They do not worship him. His greatness is hidden from them; and there is therefore among them no adoration. His goodness is hidden from them; and therefore they have no hope. His holiness is hidden from them; and therefore they have no standard of moral purity. The harmony of justice and mercy, in saving men through an accepted atonement, is hidden from them. They have no knowledge of the true sacrifice, and therefore no peace of conscience, no trust in the mercy of God. They have no knowledge of the moral will of God; and therefore there is among them no obedience. No Gospel is proclaimed to them; and no hearts therefore bound at the joyful sound. The sanctions of future punishment and reward gleam but indistinctly upon the darkness around them; and they therefore walk according to the sight of their eyes, and the imagination of their hearts; and, what is worse, in the blindness of their minds they form religions, not to check, but encourage, what true religion was designed to destroy; to fan the flame of guilty appetite, and to excite and express the worst and strongest passions.

2. But darkness alone appears to the mind of the prophet only a faint emblem of the state of the heathen: he adds, therefore, "the shadow of death."

In Scripture this expression is used for death, the grave; the darkness of that subterranean mansion into which the Jews supposed the souls of men went after death. Figuratively, the expression is used for great distress; a state of danger and terror. It is an amplification, therefore, of the prophet's thought. It is darkness, thick darkness; the darkness of the grave, or of the place where damned spirits are held in chains of darkness. The predominant idea is that of a sense of insecurity, accompanied by fear. Darkness increases danger and fear at the same time. Such is the state of the heathen. They have a strong feeling of danger, and chilling horrors of destruction; as a traveller in the dark amid pitfalls, or a mariner amid rocks. This representation affords a sufficient answer to those who fancy that, though the heathen are ignorant and superstitious, yet they are happy; that their religion, followed in a kind and innocent simplicity, yields them a comfort not inferior to our own. These are dreams. The heathen are in darkness. It is night with them; yet they are not thereby lulled into refreshing sleep, or cheered by pleasing visions. No; they walk in darkness; timidity, apprehension, disquiet, attend every step; and visions of real and imaginary horrors flit through the gloom, and inspire them with dread and horror.

Experience has justified this representation of the prophet. The religion of the heathen has ever been gloomy and horrible. If early superstitions were somewhat refined by the Greeks and Romans, this arose, in a considerable degree, from the light which was reflected

from the Jews, whose Scriptures and institutions conveyed instruction to all the neighbouring countries. Where the heathen nations have walked in darkness, they have walked in the shadow of death. The eastern and western worlds attest this. The superstitions of Hindostan, Africa, and America, are equally cruel and degrading, and present an affecting view of the fears and anxieties of the people.

Superstition is a word so often used, that the evil which it designates has passed for innocent and playful aberrations of ignorance.—Were I to attempt its description, I would say that superstition is the restless effort of a guilty but blind conscience, to find rest, and peace, and good, by unauthorized propitiations and ceremonies; and the horrid nature of these propitiations, and the multitude of these ceremonies, equally prove the strong feeling of distress in the soul, and the inefficacy of the means used to remove it. What must that feeling of guilt be, which can break the bonds of our common relationship, and offer in sacrifice a fellow creature? which can suppress the feelings of a mother, and induce the offering of a child? What must be that restless anxiety of soul, which impels men to undertake long and wasting pilgrimages? what the horror of destruction, which induces a submission to dreadful penances, like those practised in India, in which the flesh is lacerated, and agonies of long-continued pain are endured? What must be the state of feeling, which could give birth to, and continue, gods of the most gloomy and sanguinary character, represented in the forms of idols monstrously horrible, realizing forms more distorted and chilling than ever shook and tortured the imagination of the most sullen maniac? The whole is in proof of darkness; yes, and of misery and terror. The conscience asks repose, and cannot find it. Justice sternly calls for satisfaction; and the culprit offers his most costly sacrifices,—his body, or the fruit of his body, for the sin of his soul; but the offering is refused, and the threat of punishment thunders still in his ear. Thus the minds of the heathen are kept in perpetual alarm. They are all their lifetime subject to bondage through the fear of death. He points against them his unerring dart, and envelopes them in his gloomy shadow. They are in imminent danger, in the very shadow of death.

3. The prophet adds another note of the state of the heathen. “Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy.”

He not only beholds them in darkness, and surrounded with the horror of the shadow of death; but increasing in numbers only to multiply their misery.

If the prophet speaks of the Jewish people, he declares a fact remarkably striking. One of the blessings promised to their founder Abraham was, that his seed should be multiplied, as the stars of heaven, and the sands of the sea shore. But that which was designed as a blessing, and is described as such in the promise, was made a curse by the wickedness of the Jews. For what end, in the former periods of their history, did they multiply, but to furnish food for captivities, slaughter, and oppression? In later times they have multiplied, and spread themselves over the world; but their joy has not been increased. Degraded in character, and despised by the nations where they sojourn, without a country, a temple, or a sacrifice, they bear,

like Cain, the mark of God's curse, are vagabonds in the earth, preserved to warn us of the just severity of God.

There is nothing, however, in the connection to induce us to suppose that the prophet particularly contemplated the Jewish nation. The same thing must be affirmed of every nation that abandons itself to wickedness. When nations are multiplied, their political strength is increased; and happiness would be multiplied too, were it not for sin. But in wicked nations the "joy is not increased." This negative expression signifies that misery is increased. God has not added his blessing; and there is no joy. In the mind of the prophet nations are seen rising out of their original stocks; proceeding from families to tribes; to smaller states; and from states to empires: yet in all he sees only the enlargement, the expansion of human misery. In thus tracing the progress of society, he tacitly, however, intimates the cause of all this misery. The progenitors of all nations lived in the patriarchal times, and they knew much of the truth of God. This was not lost all at once; but as it was lost, political society became more miserable. As they rejected the light, they rejected their own mercy. As they multiplied and spread over the earth, they sunk into ignorance, vice, and wretchedness. Could we see as the prophet saw; could the globe roll its nations round under our eye; the proof of this would even now strike us, though Christianity, in some of its forms, has reclaimed a portion, and erected her refuges, her houses of mercy, in so many lands. The human race has multiplied. From the great centre of population in Asia, the families of men have been pushed over the continents, and the islands of the sea. But has human happiness been increased by their migrations and multiplying numbers? At the extremities of the globe, not only is religion neglected, but the arts of life are also lost, and man has become a ferocious savage, without either knowledge or humanity. The larger heathen states, which were never far removed from the centre of civilization, have taken arts and sciences with them down the stream of time, and have formed great nations. They have been multiplied; but their joy has not increased; for the state of society has become worse with every age. We venture to say, without fear of contradiction, from an infidel himself, that in proportion as the knowledge of those principles which are embodied in our revelation have faded away from the human mind, nations have become, in every sense, more disordered and miserable. The ancient and modern states of Asia are the witnesses. In them the greater part of society is dreadfully oppressed; the female sex is degraded; incessant wars have been carried on with a ferocity unknown among ourselves; civil commotions are frequent; power is the constant rule of right; and every passion is left to its own lawless violence. China alone affects to be an exception. But we begin to know that country better than formerly. The fables of infidel writers respecting it begin to be detected; and as we know, by dint of being driven to examine the subject, how to appreciate the character of the "virtuous Hindoos;" so will the virtuous Chinese ere long be stripped of their assumed excellencies. Universal experience proves the correctness of the prophet's statement. Misery is multiplied where God and truth are unknown. In this case there is no redeeming principle; the remedy is lost; despair completes the wretchedness of the people; and were

it not for the prospects opened by the Gospel, that despair would be final and absolute. Here, however, the text breaks upon us with a glorious and cheering view. The prophet, as he was contemplating the dark and wretched state of the world, beholds a light rising in obscurity; a light, a great light, dispels the heavy gloom; and comfort, and joy, and salvation dawn upon the earth. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

II. On this blessed visitation we would now fix your attention.

1. As darkness is an emblem of the religious sorrows which had overcast the world, so light is an emblem of the truth of the Gospel.

As error, like darkness, had drawn her thick veil over the moral world, and buried every object in deepest obscurity; so the light of the truth, like that of the morning, was to spread the grand scenes of religious intelligence before the world, and introduce a perfect day. This, as to many lands, the Gospel has already done; but the purpose of mercy is universal; we are called to act as instruments in its propagation; and it is no small encouragement to us that the work, the blessed work assigned us, is that of giving light to them that "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death."

The Gospel is "light:" this marks its origin from heaven. It is no human device, but comes from God himself.

It is "light:" this notes its truth. It is fitting that what is truth, without mixture of error, should be compared to the most simple substance in nature.

It is called "light" because of its penetrating and subtle nature. Kindle it up, and no shade is so gross that it cannot penetrate it; there is no imposture so well devised which it will not expose; there are no works of darkness which it will not drag to light and shame; there is no conscience so callous and closed but this light will search it.

It is called "light" because of the discoveries which it makes. It is "a great light:" it makes manifest the invisible God, in his awful and mild glories. It shows him in his works, his providence, and his grace; it opens to view the path of peace which has been so long lost; it presents the model and the promises of holiness; displays the connection between the present state of probation and eternity; it plays round the darkness of the tomb, and illuminates the mansion of the grave with the hope of a resurrection; it makes the future start to sight, and is both "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."

But it is called "light" for another reason: it is life and health to the world; it shows us "the Sun of righteousness," rising with "healing in his wings." The comparison is made to the parent bird warming her young to life, and giving health and strength by brooding over them. Such is the sun to nature: it warms to life, purges the atmosphere of its vapours, and renews the health of the world. Such is the light of the Gospel: where it prevails, spiritual life is inspired, and the moral disorders of the soul give place to health and vigour.

2. As in the vision light succeeds to darkness, so also joy succeeds to fear and misery.

This is forcibly expressed in the text: the joy which is here described is no common joy, no ordinary feeling; it is the joy of harvest,

and the joy of victory ; the joy inspired by the copious bounty of Heaven, or of those special interpositions of the Almighty in favour of his people, by which he breaks off the yoke of an oppressing enemy, and gives them his spoil. Such occasions as these are particularly calculated to gladden the heart, and fill the mind with the holiest ardours. The effect of the diffusion of the Gospel, in producing universal joy, is the constant theme of prophecy : one prophet listens, and cries, "From the ends of the earth have I heard songs, even glory to the righteous." Another, by a bold and noble personification, makes not only man, but all inanimate nature, rejoice : "Let the trees rejoice, and the floods clap their hands." Even hills and streams are vocal in praise of the universal Redeemer ; the very lights of heaven brighten at the appearance of Christ : "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold ;" as shedding a richer glory upon a redeemed world. The same idea prevails in heaven as upon earth in reference to this subject : the angel said to the shepherds of Judea, "I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto you and to all people ; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." True joy, as yet, there is none upon a large scale ; of sorrow and sighing the world has ever been full ; and as long as it remains in this state, even sighs might sooner fail than cause to sigh. Even that which is called joy is mockery and unreal, an effort to divert a pained and wounded mind ; it gleams like a transient light, only to make men more sensible of the darkness. As long as the world is wicked, it must be miserable : "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." All attempts to increase happiness, except by diminishing wickedness and strengthening the moral principle, are vain. The Gospel is the grand cure of human woe : and when it has spread to the extent seen by the prophet ; when it has leavened the heart of man, regulated his actions, shed its own character upon society ; when it has interwoven itself into human laws, government, and national institutions ; then a sorrowing world shall dry up its tears, and complaint give place to praise ; then conscience will no longer rack the spirit, for it shall be sprinkled with the blood of Christ ; the soul shall no longer pine in discontent, for God, its true and natural portion, shall be known and enjoyed ; the voice of joy shall be heard in the tabernacles of the righteous, for God will make those of one house to be agreed ; violence and oppression shall cease, and, with them, the widow's wrongs, and the orphan's tears. By a connection as inseparable as that which subsists between sin and misery, the effect of righteousness shall be peace, quietness, and assurance for ever ; the people shall joy as in the time of harvest, for righteousness shall spring out of the earth, and peace look down from heaven : "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them ;" they shall joy as in victory, for the rod of the grand oppressor shall be broken ; Satan shall fall, his reign be terminated ; and one universal transporting "Hallelujah" ascend from every land, to the honour of Him by whom the victory is achieved.

III. So vast a change must be produced by causes proportionably powerful ; and to the means by which this astonishing revolution is effected, the prophet next directs our attention : "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his

oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood ; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire."

These words speak of resistance and a struggle. He that expects the conversion of the world without the most zealous application and perseverance among God's agents, and opposition from his enemies, has not counted the cost. Even in the apostle's time he speaks of "weapons of warfare;" he arrays his Christian in complete panoply, and represents his own official business as a race and a warfare. In the conduct of this battle two things are, however, to be remarked, which distinguish it from every other contest: the absolute weakness and insufficiency of the assailants, and their miraculous success.

The weakness and insignificance of the instruments used in breaking the rod and yoke of the oppressor are sufficiently marked by the allusion to the destruction of the host of Midian by Gideon and his three hundred men. The family of Gideon was poor in Manasseh, and he was the least in his father's house; the number of men assigned him was contemptible; their weapons were no better than an earthen pitcher, a torch, and a trumpet; the men who dreamed of Gideon dreamed of him under the image of a barley cake. All this meanness was adopted that the deliverance of Israel might appear to be the work of God; and this is the manner in which he has ever wrought in the revival and spread of godliness in the world. Who were the instruments of spreading true religion in the apostolic age, we know; they were the despised fishermen of Galilee. Feeble and unpromising instruments have also been employed in subsequent revivals; and, from the conformity of the present missionary system to this model, we augur well of future success. O yes; if our plans had been laid in the cabinets of princes, applauded by the wisdom of this world, and fostered by its power, we might have doubted the result; God might have said, "The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me," Judges vii, 2. There would have been too much of man in these arrangements. But, thank God, the world has laughed at us, they have ridiculed our pretensions, and prognosticated our disappointment. For this we say again, "Thank God;" not that men are blind, but that it is a proof that our means do not excite human confidence. We have now to send to this work only earthen vessels, with enclosed lights; they have no weapon but the trumpet of the Gospel, and no watchword but "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Yet we fear not the result: but we much question whether the enemies of God do not fear it; whether some presentiment of hope in the better part of the heathen, and fear in the wicked and in those who are interested in idolatry, have not been excited by God; whether many have not dreamed already of the barley cake rolling into the camp, and overturning the tents. Whenever the victory shall take place, it shall be eminently of God; for the battle shall be, not "with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, but with burning and fuel of fire." The demonstration of the Spirit, the power of God, is here compared to fire; and it is worthy of remark, that the Spirit, in his saving operations, is always, in Scripture, compared to the most powerful principles in nature,—to the rain and dew, to wind,

to thunder, to fire. All these images denote his efficiency, and the suddenness of the success; and the extent of the benefit shall proclaim the victory to be the Lord's. We have seen the effect of this vital influence at home; and we may, in some degree, conjecture what will be done abroad. Yet perhaps something very remarkable may take place, as is intimated in the text; some peculiar exertion of the Divine power upon the mind of the world. Be this as it may; ours is to furnish the instruments, and God will use them as he pleases.

But it may be said, "Is not all this a splendid vision? You speak of weak instruments effecting a miraculous success; of the display and operation of a supernatural power, touching the hearts of men, and changing the moral state of the world; but what is the ground of this expectation?" This natural and very proper question our text answers.

IV "For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

We cannot enter into that wide field which this important passage opens to us; but shall use it only as the answer to the question just stated, as laying down the grounds of that expectation of success which we form as to missionary efforts. This it does in a manner the most satisfactory.

The Christianizing of the world is no novel thought, like the philosophic scheme of the perfectibility of human nature, of which we have heard so much. The plan is not ours. It was laid in the mind of God before the world was. The principal arrangements of the scheme are not left to us; but are already fixed, not by our wisdom, but by the infinite wisdom of God. The part we fill is very subordinate; and we expect success, not for the wisdom or fitness of the means themselves, but because they are connected with mightier motions, whose success is vast and rapid, and whose direction is Divine. In a word, we expect success, because God has formed a scheme of universal redemption, to be gradually but fully developed. He has given gifts to the world, the value of which is in every age to be more fully demonstrated; and he has established offices in the person of Christ, which he is qualified to fill, to the full height of the Divine idea. In other words, we expect success, because "to us a child is born, to us a son is given." The incarnate God is come; and, by the affixing to the cross of that consecrated spotless body which he assumed, has paid the costly price of the redemption of all mankind.

We expect success, because "to us a son is given." The gift is to us; to us, considered as men. He took our nature; he is "the son of man;" he was made flesh; and therefore is allied to man, to human nature. He is the brother of every man; of the black, and of the white: of men of all countries. We have no exclusive share in the son of Jesse. We cannot say, "We have ten parts, and you have two, or none." "To us a son is given." "He is ours," shall every nation say, to the ends of the earth. Shout, ye continents and islands, with

all your fair, your tawny, or your sooty tribes; and the burden of your song shall be, "God with us! Immanuel, Immanuel, God with us; God among us; God for us!"

But "the government" is placed "upon his shoulder." This is another ground of confidence. All power is given to him. All things are put under him, to be used as instruments of accomplishing his proper work, to seek and to save that which was lost. Devils, angels, and men; the elements of nature, and the hearts of all mankind; the wisdom, the wealth, and, if you please, the folly and the poverty, of the world; the commotions of nations, and the extension of commerce; are all employed in the advancement of evangelical truth; because He reigns whose wisdom sees, whose power grasps, and whose love directs, every thing.

We can see nothing of strangeness and improbability in the conversion of the whole world to discourage us, when we read that the name of our Lord and Leader is "Wonderful;" and that, in the mysteries of his nature, and his acts of grace and government, there has ever been, and will ever be, a series of wonders, which shall excite the endless admiration of his people, and silence and shame his adversaries.

While he bears the title of the "Counsellor," he who giveth counsel, we shall beg his direction, as to our present plans and future conduct, with confidence; for he bears no title in vain. He will guide us by his wisdom in all our efforts and plans.

Powerful as the opposition may be to his truth, we see it overcome. We see with joy his foot on the necks of his enemies; for he is "the mighty God," and the people must fall under him.

"Is any thing too hard for thee,
Almighty Lord of all;
Whose threat'ning looks dry up the sea,
And make the mountains fall?"

We derive, too, no small encouragement, on the present occasion, from his title, "the Father of the eternal age," the Gospel period; for as the great Originator of all the blessings and comforts, the holy works and benevolent institutions, of that age, he will not disown that which we form this day,—an institution which seeks his glory, and the promotion of his designs.

Lastly, if we wanted encouragement and motive in this work, we should find it in that endearing title, "the Prince of peace," and the corresponding declaration, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." This terminates the whole in a manner most glorious to God, and most hopeful to man. A prospect opens through darkness into light; confusion, into order; contention, into peace; misery, into happiness; and the prospect widens. The "peace" shall have no "end;" and its "increase" shall have "no end." It shall spread from the fountain which flows by the mount of God, our Zion, into the deserts of the world; and time shall only widen and expand it. It mixes with the still broader and clearer streams of life and joy, rivers clear as crystal, which flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Our text has set before us the moral misery of the human race; the purpose of God to remove it by the diffusion of his truth and grace; the means chosen for this purpose; and the ground of that certain suc-

cess which must attend the application of the prescribed means under the Divine blessing. It now only remains for me to invite you, my hearers, to such a co-operation in this great and good work, as your own ability and the importance of the enterprise demand.

We appeal to you as Christians; and as Christians I am sure we shall be successful. I cannot look upon a man as a Christian, but I look upon him as a friend to missions, a friend to the heathen, a friend to the cause of Christ. To suppose the contrary, would be to deny him the venerable name of Christian. See you a man bearing the name of a Christian, and yet regardless of the honour of his Lord? Strike his name out of the baptismal register; take off his badge; and exhibit him as an unfeeling pagan. But it is not to such persons I now address myself; but to Christians who have received the spirit of their religion,—the feeling heart, the boundless charity, the burning zeal, the liberal hand, of the Gospel. You are now called to gratify these feelings, and to employ these energies. Your Master gives you the summons. He calleth for you. There is your work. Like him, go about doing good, by your missionaries; like him, go and open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and proclaim the Gospel jubilee to the slaves of sin. Does ignorance excite pity? Then pity a benighted world. Does misery excite compassion? Then let your compassions, your sympathies, flow for a world which groans under the direst yoke, faints under its load, and even groans for deliverance. Are you jealous for the honour of God? See in the state of the heathen the strongest of excitements. Your God is unknown, and dishonoured. Idols have usurped his worship. Demons seat themselves on his throne. Are there none here to set up the banners of the Lord God omnipotent, and by the thunder of his name to chase the hosts of the lying idols of hell? Your Saviour is unknown: Jesus, that name which charms your fears, and bids your sorrows cease; at the very mention of which you drink in inspiration, and become new creatures. There are vast and populous countries that never heard the sound of that name; myriads of creatures for whom he bled, who know not their Benefactor. Many blessings of Providence, and some of grace, they have received from him; but, like the man in the Gospel, they wist not who it is that blessed them. Have you no anxiety to reveal the secret; to withdraw the veil; to show the Friend of man to man; and to say, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world?” Do you not say,

“Jesus, I love thy charming name,
’Tis music in my ear?”

O let heaven and earth hear it! Let us, at least, do our utmost, in future, to extend the knowledge of this name, and to make its savour refreshing as the incense of the sanctuary, known in every place, “a savour of life unto life.” Perhaps some are ready to go and preach in this name; and say, “Here I am; send me.” Happy shall we be if this day’s service give another missionary to the heathen.

But we appeal to you as British Christians. Other Christians may have their work nearer home; but God has evidently made it our duty to become instruments in converting the world. For this he has given us wealth, commercial connections, a mercantile navy, and colonies. He has given us also light, and religious liberty. We travel every part

of the globe ; and of late, to use the language of a negro, "he has broken the door through" into India. O Britain, listen to this call of thy God ! Thy garners are full : scatter to the east and to the west. Thy light is burning ; lift it up, that it give light to all around. If thou scatterest, thou shalt increase. If thou blessest others, thou shalt be blessed thyself. But if thou hoarest up the seed of life, God shall smite thee with mildew ; and if thou putteth thy light under a bushel, it shall be extinguished in its own vapour.

Lastly, give me leave to enjoin, not only missionary zeal, but also an increased attention to personal piety. On this occasion, we disguise it not, we want your influence, your exertions, your money : but most of all, your piety. When this is secured, we gain all the rest. For your own welfare, and lest, while many shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God, you yourselves should be excluded, see that you receive in faith and love the Son given unto you. Thus you will be blessed in him ; and you will become ardent missionaries, or friends to the mission work. Your zeal will be the pure flame of love ; and your lamp will burn with a steady and cheering light, supplied with the oil of piety. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

SERMON C.—*The Majesty and Condescension of God.*

"Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth," Psalm cxiii, 5, 6.

Noble and magnificent ideas of God have been found in all ages, and in almost all countries. The great want of the civilized among the ancient heathen world was, not that they did not know God, but that, "when they knew him, they did not glorify him as God, neither were thankful." The philosophy of the world, even in the present day, has its elevated and magnificent views of the Divine Being ; yet it would seem uniform, whether among the sages of the heathen world, or among the philosophers of our own time, that the loftier their views are, even of the Divine nature, the more they tend to distrust and unbelief ; and that just in proportion as they have thought nobly of God, so the impression has deepened that, with respect to individuals at least, they were not the subjects of his immediate care. The doctrine of a particular providence, and the doctrine of direct Divine influence upon the heart of man, have by them always been considered absurd and fanatical. Now, when I turn to the sages of inspiration, to the holy men of old, who thought and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, I find quite a different result ; and that, in proportion to the views they had of the glory of God, so was their confidence and hope.

That two such opposite results should spring from the same order of thoughts with respect to the Divine Being, is a singular fact, which demands and deserves some inquiry. How is it that, among the men

of the world, wise as they are, in proportion as they have had high and exalted views of God, these lofty ideas have tended to distrust; while just in proportion as we are enlightened on the very same subjects, by the Scriptures of truth, when rightly and spiritually understood, we, as well as the authors of these sacred books, in proportion as we see the glory and the grandeur of God, are excited to a filial and comforting trust? There are two propositions, brethren, in the text, which human reason could never unite. "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high?"—but yet he "humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and that are in the earth." And the reason, brethren, why the mere unassisted faculties of man could never unite these two ideas is, that they could not, in the nature of things, be united, but by a third discovery, which must come from God himself, and show the other two in perfect harmony,—the discovery that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That discovery is intimated to us by the very name which our Saviour bore at his incarnation, "Immanuel, God with us." There God and man met. And when we know this, and enter into the spirit of this great truth, then we know that there is a philanthropy, a love of man, in God; an intense, a boundless love even of creatures low and degraded as they are; then we wonder no longer how it is that he who exalteth himself to dwell on high should humble himself to behold, not only the things which are in heaven, but those also upon the earth. Thank God that we know this; that we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and that thus we have the key to all the mysteries of his condescending and gracious manifestations!

Having made these general observations, let us now consider the two propositions, briefly, which the text contains.

I. In the first place, that God dwelleth on high. "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high?"

It is not my intention to descant on the greatness and glory of God: I should darken counsel on such a subject by words without knowledge. One step plunges us in an unfathomable abyss; the very first excursion of thought perplexes us with the immensity by which we are surrounded. It is my intention rather to consider this subject, my brethren, with respect to its practical bearings, and to show you the great ends for which these revelations of God are made to us. For in Scripture nothing is revealed as mere matter of speculation; nothing is revealed for the purpose merely of gratifying curiosity; nothing is revealed for the purpose of exciting a strong sentimental feeling, except as it may be subordinated to something higher; all that is said of God by himself in his sacred word is said for the purpose of producing in us humility, and faith, and hope. "The Lord our God," says the text, "dwelleth on high."

1. This is a declaration of the Divine majesty, designed to rebuke that thoughtlessness which we are so apt to indulge, and to impress us with that reverence which is at once so becoming and so necessary.

The reference is, no doubt, to the dwelling place of God,—for he has his dwelling place. Hence, in the margin, it is rendered, "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who exalteth himself to dwell on high?"

We seem to be directed to climb the heights of nature, to ascend from

world to world ; and then we are reminded that the dwelling place of God is high above all these heights ; that, unapproachable by human eye, he dwells in some shrine of light ; in some shrine of splendour, overpowering even to the gaze of angels, and before which they tremble as they look. But why is this discovery made to us ? We learn from the sacred Scriptures that this light is not God ; that this external glory is no part of his nature ; that he but dwells in it ; that it is an emblem of what he is ; that it is a visible representation,—in as far as a visible representation can shadow forth what is immaterial,—it is a representation of his intellectual and moral glories to his rational creatures. The light stands as the symbol of a mind which has no shade of darkness ; that pure element is the emblem of a purity which has no stain ; its activity and diffusiveness are the emblem of God's ever-active presence, by which he filleth all in all. And thus we are taught, from this very reference to God's dwelling in light, that, though invisible to us, we are in the light of his countenance ; that the whole universe is in that light ; that his presence is every where ; that his eye searcheth all things, even the heart of man ; and from the views of God every where present, of a purity unsullied, of a knowledge perfect and complete, we are taught to live perpetually under a reverent impression of God's majesty, and the whole earth is called to fear before him. "The Lord our God," then, in respect of his Divine majesty, "dwelleth on high."

2. This is a revelation of his power.

When I come to connect this revelation with its practical ends, I see, especially in this manifestation of God's power, one of the grand foundations of our faith ; that principle which is so absolutely necessary to our comfort and our salvation. Let us endeavour to illustrate this. When the promise was given that Sarah should have a son, she laughed through incredulity. And how did the angel reprove her ? "Is any thing too hard for the Lord ?" What is the praise of Abraham's faith on one occasion ? That he intentionally offered up his son Isaac, though in him he had received the promises ; and that he fully believed that God was able to raise him up from the dead, and would do so, rather than the promise should fail. Now, these illustrations go to this point, that wherever there is a clear and express promise made as to any thing, just in proportion as we are instructed by the holy Scriptures in the almighty power of God, that, united to our knowledge of his faithfulness, forms the foundation for that absolute and entire trust which we are called to exercise with respect to the promises of God. And truly, brethren, we have often to resort to this great idea to support our faith, even with respect to the Divine promises. How often have we been, or may we be exposed to troubles which we cannot sustain, and know we cannot, in our own strength ! How often may we be placed in circumstances of temptation, which, if left to our own strength, we cannot resist ! How sorely and how frequently have we proved that we have sins and corruptions within us which we cannot overcome ! Whither, then, are we to resort for strength to enable us to vanquish our spiritual enemies, and rise superior to all the trials and temptations which beset the Christian's path ?

But the Church is taught to make the same reference to God's almighty power with individual believers in all ages. When the arm

of perscution has been raised, and when the men of the world, leagued with its powers, have risen up, and sought, with savage keenness, her utter extermination, in such circumstances, what is the natural appeal? Is it not an appeal immediately from her own weakness to the power of God? As in the beautiful instance of the woman of Canaan, cut off from all other hope, and throwing herself at the feet of the Saviour, and crying with the unaffected humility of believing prayer, "Lord, help me;" the language of the Church in all ages has been, "Help, Lord; let not man prevail." "I will lift up mine eyes," saith David, "unto the hills, whence cometh my help. Our help standeth in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth! Out of the depths have I cried unto thee. When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

Steady views of the Divine power, my brethren, and that with respect to all those circumstances to which the promises of God in his blessed word continually relate, are, in fact, the foundations of our faith: and there our spirits may rest. Now, there is, in my text, a revelation of this power. "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high?" You not only see that his residence is high above the boundaries of all created nature, but, if you climb through the scale of being, however high and exalted, you may say, as to the highest of them, "There is One that is higher than they." They all hang upon him in whom they live, and move, and have their being. "For by him were all things created that are in heaven and earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and by him all things consist." Are any of them rebels? They are in chains. Have they kept their first estate? They are his ministers ever ready to do his pleasure. Every thing, my brethren, being thus subject to Him who is high above all, whose almighty power has hitherto controlled all things, and continues to control and regulate them, this revelation of the Divine power is made, that man—the man that trusts in God, and rests upon his almighty power—may be afraid of nothing; and that, when he has to believe any express promise which is made to him in the word of God, whose accomplishment, to the man of the world, seems altogether impossible, he may say, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" receiving the promise, and waiting for the Divine interposition, with that faith which almighty God at all times has honoured, and will honour to the end of the world. "The Lord dwelleth on high."

3. This is a revelation of his wisdom, of his infinite and arranging wisdom.

There is nothing in which we are more interested than in the great doctrine, that there is a power presiding over the affairs of the universe; a power, not only superior to every thing beside, but a power which arranges and manages every thing; a power under the direction of wisdom. In that we are interested. It is connected with our comfort as to individual life; connected with our confidence, as to God's Church; and connected with all our views of providence, as to the management and issues of the affairs of this world.

We have often need to resort to God's wisdom, as a first principle, as well as to his power. Every thinking, every caring, anxious man, whether his care be exercised with respect to his own soul, or the

Church of God, or the world, will find that he has no solid comfort, but in resorting to the wisdom, as well as to the power, of God; and when it is manifested to him by a revelation so certain, he will bless God for the information, and find, in consequence, a true repose of spirit. For what an intricate drama is the history of the world at large! And who can tell in what it may issue? If viewed superficially, and in itself, without throwing in upon the scene light from some other quarter, one can scarcely see a plan running through it. There has been a constant succession of similar events; the same scenes have been acted over and over again in different parts of the earth; and all seems to be without design or plan. I have often felt curious to know the thoughts of a really thinking, inquiring man upon this subject; one who does not advert to the information which the Scriptures give us, as to the government of the world. It seems to me that he would necessarily be involved in the utmost perplexity. What a mystery has the Church of Christ been, and what a mystery does it still continue to be, in very many respects! In the symbolic book of the Revelation, it is true, she is represented as a woman clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet; but, instead of that, we have seen her in many ages, as though clothed with clouds, and walking in darkness, and linked with all the mutations of this changeable world. And, when viewed apart from the light and evidence of the Gospel, what a mystery is individual life! How many purposes of ours are frustrated! How full is life of fragments, so to speak; fragments which seem to have no connection with each other! How often are we involved in the most painful and perplexing intricacies! Frequently have the best of men said with Jacob, "All these things are against me." But is it indeed thus? Is the world like an abandoned vessel, driven by the tempest, the sport of every wind and of every wave? Brethren, will the time never arrive when the state of the Church shall correspond to the prophetic vision, and when the very darkness with which in former times she has been surrounded, will render more effulgent the light, not of the moon, the symbol of change, but of that celestial orb of day with which she shall be clothed, and when she shall advance increasingly in peerless glory and uncreated splendour for ever and ever? And is it so, that there is no secret hand guiding the concerns of individuals too? Is there no design in all this? Is there no great end of wisdom and of mercy to be accomplished by all the parts, which to us appear separate and distinct in the believer's history? Is there no enigma in his various trials and sufferings? As in the riddle of Samson's lion, shall food never come out of the eater, or sweetness out of the strong? Is it so, my brethren? The text supplies an answer to inquiries such as these. "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high?" at the head of all things, and, therefore, at the head of government; for he dwelleth there on his regal throne, in the place of his supreme dominion.

And as this revelation cannot be a revelation of mere power, but is a revelation also of wisdom united with power, then the issue of all things must necessarily be right, and the wisdom will then be manifest. Modern philosophy has very much enlarged to us the boundaries of the material universe, by the aid of glasses, and the observations that have been made by the human eye, assisted by these instruments: the cal-

culations that have been founded upon these, very likely, are exceedingly just ; and we are astonished at the immense, the almost boundless, extent of the material universe. My brethren, instead of that shocking a Christian, instead of that being any thing in the service of infidelity, there is nothing in which, when rightly understood, we may rejoice more. Enlarge to our view the boundaries of God's universe as much as you may, and then be sure of this, that as in wisdom he hath made them all, so there are vast plans connected with them all ; and in proportion to the vastness of the universe itself are the great ends which have to be accomplished, and which it shall be ours to know, and, knowing them, it shall be ours, too, to adore more deeply the unsearchable wisdom and knowledge of God.

Then, as to the world itself, there must necessarily, after all the mysteries with which it is surrounded, and the blackness which seems to hang upon it, if considered with respect to the apparent absence of intention and design ; there must, from the general principle, that God hath made and wisely governs all things, be some grand plan to be developed as to the world itself. How many millions have trod upon its surface ! And how has every scene that has taken place upon its extended arena, served to develop to us some grand moral principle ! What sweeps of judgment have been made to visit it ; and yet how have even these been accompanied by breaks of tender mercy ! Let us remember that the incarnate God trod its soil, and that the elements of earth were taken up into his very substance, and united with him ; let us remember that here he paid the price of our redemption ; that, when he ascended up on high, he left a blessing upon earth behind him ; that he planted there his heavenly truth ; that he established his Church ; that he vouchsafed to it the revelations of his word ; that he visits it with the influence of his Holy Spirit ; that he has been, and is, bringing over continually many from their wandering and estrangement to his own fold ; and that an innumerable company of saved souls are now carried from this earthly scene of things, encircling in holiness and felicity his heavenly throne. That has all been connected with this earth ; and if you know not to what all things are tending, know, Christian, that the Lord exalteth himself to dwell on high, and, from that height of power, with an infinite wisdom, orders and subordinates all things to the production of some great result, worthy of the necessary, though, at present, mysterious and uncombined, circumstances, which successively have taken place in this scene of manifestation.

And let the individual believer trust in this wisdom too. If thy heart be sound in the statutes of thy God, if it be thy great desire to glorify him in his Son, then, whatever may be your present trials, and perplexities, and doubts, and fears, there is wisdom, Divine wisdom, in all God's dealings with you. Trust in that wisdom, then ; be assured, by and by, the crooked shall he made straight, and the rough places plain. By and by, the glory shall be revealed ; we shall see all things in their true and relative connections, and how they have all been subordinated to the grand end on which the love of God hath fixed itself,—the salvation and final glorification of the sinner that puts his trust in him. "Who then is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high ?"

But there is another thought which we may briefly touch upon : God

is said not only to be on high, but to “dwell” on high; this intimates calm and composed operation; and it is proper for us to take this view of the character of God’s administration. You recollect that, in all ages, unbelief has been, in some respects, rendered plausible by the delays of God in the accomplishment of his designs. So, in St. Peter’s time, it would seem that, because the first apostles and preachers of Christianity had dwelt much on Christ’s coming to judgment, they cried out, “Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” What is the apostle’s answer to this? His first answer, I grant, is, that all things have not continued as they were from the creation; that there was a flood of waters, and that those who said, “Where is the promise of his coming?” in the days of Noah, in an unbelieving spirit, were at last answered by the bursting earth and the breaking heavens; as every sinner shall be answered by the manifestation of God’s sweeping judgments. That was his first answer; but his second answer contains an idea connected with the principle I have laid down: “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” The Being who is from everlasting to everlasting is under no necessity to hurry his plans; therefore he hath fixed the times and the seasons, which are all with him. And we are not, from his delays, my brethren, to feed our unbelief, but we must wait with patience; we are to judge of nothing before the time: the times and the seasons the Father hath kept in his own hand; there they are, and in his own time the mystery shall be unveiled, the design completed, and the promise gloriously fulfilled.

There was a fulness of time for the coming of the Son in the flesh; and there is a fulness of time for the accomplishment of all his purposes of judgment and of mercy. He dwelleth on high in calm and moveless majesty; and, in his time, shall show who is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;” he will make manifest to the Church, and to the world, the grace of his heavenly government, especially to those of the faithful and persevering, who study his word, and observe his ways.

Thus we see that these revelations of the Divine Majesty and greatness are all connected with the most important practical principles.

II. Let us now very shortly attend to the second part of the text: “The Lord, who dwelleth on high, humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth.”

As is the majesty, so also is the mercy of our God. He humbleth himself to behold, not only the things that are in heaven,—and that itself would be a stoop of condescension,—but he humbleth himself, also, to behold the things upon the earth: and how low, is indicated in the next verse: “He raiseth the needy from the dunghill, and setteth the poor on high.”

1. In the first place, this condescension of God to things on earth, respects the regard which he has had for our race, for the race fallen indeed as it is, poor, and seated in the dust, and lying on the dunghill.

He humbled himself so far as even to assume the nature of our race, to pay the price of its redemption, and to stand in the presence of God as the Prophet, the Priest, and the eternal Advocate for sinners. So he humbled himself; and it is this grand humiliation of the Saviour to

which all the prophets gave witness, and to which all the other condescensions of God have respect. Let not this doctrine, then, be looked upon as if we had no duty to perform : having this great High Priest and Advocate, let us commit our cause to his pleading ; let us confess our sins before the throne ; let us trust to his intercession, that we may know, by experience, how greatly God humbleth himself to behold the things, not only in heaven, but also upon the earth.

2. There is, no doubt, also a reference in this to the respect which God pays even to the lower ranks of the race, seeing that he raiseth up the poor, and lifteth up the needy.

I have no doubt there is reference, throughout the whole of this psalm, to evangelical times ; that, in this respect, it is a prophetic psalm, including a reference especially to Christianity, as it may be called, by eminence and distinction, the religion of the poor,—its greatest glory. For when John the Baptist sent two disciples to Jesus to know whether he was the Messiah or not, the answer of our Lord was, “The blind see, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised :” all extraordinary events ; miracles, in short, which proved his Divine commission. And he summed up the whole by saying, “The poor have the Gospel preached unto them :” as great a miracle as any ; as great a distinction as any. There never was a religion but the true religion, in all its various dispensations, that had equal respect to all classes of society : in all others there was a privileged class ; but here there is none. Perhaps one of the most interesting views of Christianity we can take, is its wonderful adaptation to the character and circumstances of the poor. What an opportunity does it furnish for the manifestation of the bright and mild graces of the Holy Spirit ! What sources of comfort does it open to mollify the troubles of life ! And how often, in choosing the poor, rich in faith, to make them heirs of the kingdom, does God exalt the poor out of the dust, and the needy from the dunghill !

3. But the text includes a reference also to the condescension of God in his religion to man in circumstances of trouble.

For as it was the custom of persons in great trouble to clothe themselves in sackcloth, and sit in dust, and even in ashes, so, my brethren, the expressions that immediately follow the text imply, that the condescension of this great Being who dwelleth on high, extends to all his creatures, whatever circumstances may distinguish them, amidst all the troubles to which they may be exposed. His eye penetrates through the ranks of angels, and fixes upon a trembling, humble, contrite sinner ; and to every man who clothes himself with sackcloth, and sits in the dust and ashes of repentance, his mourning for sin, through the great atoning sacrifice offered once for its expiation, shall be followed by rejoicing ; he shall be set among the princes, even among the princes of God’s people, his name being written among the sons of God.

4. Finally. The expressions of the text refer to our nature.

To this I advert, not without authority from other parts of Scripture. Human nature itself, considered as human nature, is sometimes spoken of in Scripture in very affecting language, both with respect to its humiliation, and likewise with respect to God’s interest in it. We are, in this respect, as to nature, poor and fallen, and reduced to the

very dust; but the God that dwelleth on high so humbleth himself to look upon the things that are in the earth, as to raise "the poor out of the dust, and the needy out of the dunghill." St. Paul, you remember, teaches us that David, in the eighth psalm, was speaking about Jesus, when he said, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the work of thine hands." It was Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, and then crowned with glory and honour, all things being put under his feet. But there, let it be observed, was the honour done to human nature. Here is the great principle on which the admiration of the psalmist was founded: that God, who made the starry sky, and who, as it is expressed in the text, exalteth himself to dwell on high, should so far stoop as to raise man—human nature, in the person of his Son—up to this glory and honour, and to put all things under his feet. And thus, when the Son was raised, every man who believes in Christ was raised also. Christ, who is the head, cannot be exalted without the members; and therefore Christ's exaltation is the pattern of ours; his body, now incorruptible, the pattern of our body to be glorified; his stainless glorified spirit the pattern of ours, which is to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, pure as the light in which God dwells in the kingdom of heaven, the very place into which he has entered; this glory is to be the residence of his people for ever.

What, then, are we to learn from all this? Many practical lessons I have already read to you: let them not be forgotten. Let the subject teach you to reverence the Divine Majesty; when you find a promise of his grace, to have respect to his almighty power, to say, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" and to receive his promises in faith, resting upon his power, believing that he who has promised is able also to perform; and upon his wisdom, regulating, and controlling, and subordinating all things to his own glory, and the eternal good of his people. These practical lessons have been already inculcated. But we have also spoken of his condescension to us worms of the earth: and shall we, by neglect and indifference, do all in our power to frustrate his purposes of wisdom and of mercy? Will you not suffer God to raise you? Will you hold with so much firmness of grasp your degrading condition, and your earthly attachments, as to rest satisfied in them, and resist the mercy of God? O let him raise you out of the dust of your humble condition, and set you among the princes of his people, giving you an inheritance among his children, and putting you into his family, that he may, by his sanctifying grace, prepare you for the enjoyments at his own right hand in the heavens, and where you, with the whole redeemed Church, shall obtain salvation for ever and ever!

SERMON CI.—*The Reign of God.**Preached on the day of public thanksgiving, February, 1814.*

“The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice,” Psalm xcvi, 1.

NATIONAL blessings demand the homage of national gratitude. This gratitude ought to be expressed, not only by individuals, but also by national acts; and for this reason we ought conscientiously to respect the authority which has called us together this day, to present our thanksgivings to the God of heaven. It is one of those righteous acts of a Christian government which commands our peculiar respect, because it serves to uphold the honour and claims of religion, and is a public and unequivocal avowal of a truth which can never be denied, and ought never to be forgotten, that “the Lord reigneth.”

Every thing in religion is great; and to express our joys for public blessings, in a religious manner, is not only a Christian, but also an elevated and a noble, employment. The mere politician, in a time of national deliverance, looks only at the matter of fact, with its bearings upon the temporal interests of man; and the exultation arising from such views may be suitably enough expressed by the glow of animal feeling, by the toast and the song; but religion gives us larger views, calls forth better feelings, and gives those feelings an expression more worthy of our character. We look, not only to the occurrences which call for our gratitude, but to the invisible hand which has produced them. We are led through the chain of second causes, to the originating cause of all good; and if we come to these contemplations in a proper spirit, our minds will be enlarged, our principles strengthened, and our hearts and lives made better.

The mercies for which we are called this day to offer thanks are not common mercies; and they therefore call for more than ordinary gratitude. A larger demand would have been made upon us, could we have joined to our successes in war that great and crowning blessing, which is the only legitimate end of our conflict,—peace. We trust, however, this is not far distant; and for those events which so evidently tend to this result, we ought, doubtless, to be deeply thankful.

For many years accumulating clouds of disaster and despair thickened around our country. Every opening which remained to afford a passage to the rays of hope seemed to close up. The circle still grew narrower. The darkness which rested upon Europe seemed to approach nearer and nearer to us; and the cloud wore, as it approached, a still more menacing aspect. As if it were the express intention of God to lead us from an arm of flesh, and to prepare us to mark his own intended future special interposition, the plans of our power and our policy were alike frustrated. On a sudden this dense mass was broken; light and hope have returned; and we have now again entered into that blessed state of the world when the sword returns to its scabbard, and the bond of amity binds in one family the lately raging and tumultuous nations. “This is the Lord’s doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes.” It is a comment, striking and instructive, upon the words of the text: “The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.”

That principle, which is the hope of the faithful in the darkest night, is the great source of our joys and gratitude now that the darkness is chased by the light. The text calls us to consider,

I. The subjects of the Divine government.

II. Certain characters which mark his administration of the affairs of the world.

III. Those proofs of the doctrine, that "the Lord reigneth," which late occurrences have furnished. And,

IV The demand which is made upon our grateful joys: "Let the earth rejoice."

We invite your attention,

I. To the subjects of the Divine government.

Every thing that God has made is subject to his government. The universe of matter; and all the beings, rational and animal, which he has caused to inhabit it. These must all be sustained by his power, fed by his bounty, arranged by his wisdom; and this great work of sustaining and directing all nature is called his natural government.

With this, however, our subject has no concern, except that by virtue of this government the powers of nature are made instruments in the conduct of his moral government, for the reward or punishment of his creatures; because, as he has not delegated his government to what are called general laws, he can suspend the usual course of natural operations; make a sun or a moon to stand still; cause the stars in their courses to fight against Sisera; give fresh directions, or additional intensity, to the operations of the elements; and thus make a covenant for his people with the stones of the field, or raise all nature up in arms against his enemies.

The moral government of God is that which is principally contemplated in the text; and by this is meant the direction and control which he exercises over moral agents, over every rational being. The circumstances of trial in which he places them, the assistance he affords them, and the rewards or punishments he assigns them, are all comprehended in this. Every intelligent being is therefore a subject of the government in question.

Angels are under this government. Of these we know little. Perhaps they have passed their probation, and their employment is a part of the honour of their reward. Or some of them may be still in a probationary state; and the fulfilment of the duties enjoined upon them may be the test of their fidelity. This, however, we know, that the earth is the great theatre of their exertions; that they are put under Christ; and are employed both in judgment and mercy.

Devils compose the next order of intelligences under the moral government of God. They are fallen, apostate, and unredeemed spirits. Yet it would seem that they are not finally judged, but suffered to mix with human kind. The theatre of their malicious operations is also the earth; and it seems to be an important circumstance of our probation, that we should not only be exposed to the influence of visible objects, and the inclinations of our own hearts, to induce us to a right conduct, or seduce us to the wrong; but that opposite and counteracting invisible influence should be exerted upon us, to lead to good or evil, to which our own wills must give the fatal or the happy cast; that heaven and hell should, in a word, struggle for the soul of man.

Between these orders of beings is man, to whom the Divine government seems to stand in a special and most eminent relation ; and principally for this reason, that he is the subject of redemption. The earth is the great theatre chosen for the display of the Divine perfections in a course of moral government. To this point of the universe the attention of all creatures is turned. Here the grand struggle of adverse powers and principles takes place ; and here the great plans of Divine wisdom are laid, which are, in their accomplishment, to be the ceaseless wonder of all happy spirits through eternity. "The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice."

The human race, as subject to the Divine government, are to be considered as distributed into nations, and as individuals. In both respects they are moral agents, and accountable to God. Nations are under a peculiar kind of government. They are considered as having a kind of unity as collective bodies. Perhaps a correct method of conceiving of this subject is, that because nations, as nations, have no existence beyond the present state, they are governed as an individual would be who had no future existence assigned to him. They have their rewards and punishments in this life.

Consider a nation as an individual in the whole course of its existence. We see how the sins of one generation may be visited upon another ; as the sins of an individual person, committed in one period of his life, may be punished at another. Yet nations are not governed by a rigid law of works, so to speak ; for nations, as such, have an interest in the work of Christ. He is an intercessor for them. To them the throne of grace is accessible ; and the good are suffered to pray and prevail in behalf of the wicked. Generally speaking, the character of nations in the sight of God is estimated by majorities, and by public national acts ; except that sometimes evils are averted, and favours are conferred, in peculiar honour of the faithful few. And hence the good, when their number is small, may often share national punishment ; and the wicked, when the righteous are numerous enough to effect national acknowledgments of God, participate in national blessings. God has other means of correcting these apparent irregularities in his conduct toward the individual subjects of them.

Individuals are also under the Divine government. These are contemplated separately in the Divine plan. "Every man must give an account of himself to God." As every man is redeemed by the death of Christ, offers of mercy are made to him. Rules of conduct are assigned to him. If obedient, he has the Divine favour ; yet in this world he may be afflicted. If he be disobedient, he is under the curse ; yet in this world he may be prosperous. But individuals have another life. There is a day of judgment appointed, and a state of endless retribution ; and there all becomes equal. Every man is treated according to his own personal conduct. "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality," God will render "eternal life." "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," he will render "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ; but glory honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first,

and also to the Gentile : for there is no respect of persons with God," Rom. ii, 7-11.

All these beings are the subjects of the Divine government. Yet it is a very defective view to consider them only as put under his power and control for the mere display of his sovereignty. They are under direction and influence, as well as control. As there was a plan in the Divine mind, before this fair world sprang out of chaos, and by which it was formed ; as the turbulent mass subsided into a perfect conformity to this beautiful idea ; so there is a plan of providence, or, which is the same, a general end to be accomplished. As in the one case the Divine power and wisdom controlled the turbid mass, so in the other he grasps the very liberty of moral agents, and makes all their circumstances, their motives, their volitions, their acts, the instruments of his glorious purposes ; hastens without violence the great ends proposed with the lapse of every age ; and all things shall at length work together for good, and effect the ends of infinite wisdom, universal goodness, and pure justice. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth be ever so unquiet." However the waves of the sea toss themselves, the sun still strikes them with his steady beam ; so though the floods of the people lift up their proud heads, and clap their hands, they are all under his eye. Their very ragings have been contemplated ; and "the Lord on high shall be seen to be mightier than the noise of many waters."

We proceed to consider,

II. Certain characters which mark his administration.

1. It is sovereign and uncontrolled.

This truth is strongly asserted in Scripture. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ?" Nebuchadnezzar was sent among the beasts to learn that lesson. What the pride of his prosperity would not suffer him to learn, he was taught by the misery of his condition, that "the most high God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will," Dan. v, 21.

This gives certainty to the Divine government, and makes it the hope and joy of good men. In the darkest times of sorrow and calamity, they rest on this, that all is conducted well. He maketh even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain.

"When thou wilt to work proceed,
Thy purpose firm none can withstand ;
Frustrate the determined deed,
Or stay the' Almighty hand."

It is to display his sovereign rights that he so often specially interposes to bless or to punish ; to curb the pride, break the plans, and frustrate the purposes of man. Were it not for this, were his plans in every particular to be accomplished by visible and human agents, though the proof of his dominion would remain the same, it would not be so obvious. We should be apt to attribute too much to human power and policy. But here God appears to maintain his character as a Sovereign ; and in those great and unexpected events which have so often changed the aspect of affairs in the world, it is made visible to all, that "the Lord reigneth."

2. A second character of this government is, that, notwithstanding its sovereignty and certainty, it interferes not with human liberty.

This is a doctrine as clearly stated in Scripture as the former. If by freedom it were meant that man is left wholly to himself, that no influence is exerted over him, no direction given to his thinkings and motives, the doctrine could not be maintained consistently with the sovereignty of God; but this insulated situation is not necessary to constitute freedom. If we are so free from constraint, that our actions are properly our own, we have the freedom of moral agents. This is taught in Scripture. We shall be rewarded or punished for our actions; and they are therefore properly our own. Of this we have the highest evidence of which a subject is capable, our own internal perceptions. We feel that we are free; and that we might have avoided the evil into which we have fallen, and have done the good that we have neglected.

We may not be able to reconcile the sovereign control of God with the freedom of his creatures; but that does not prove the doctrine false. It only proves our own ignorance. The Scriptures assert both propositions. Reason can demonstrate that they do not contain a contradiction. And if they involve difficulty, that is no more than may be affirmed of truths universally acknowledged.

3. A third character of the Divine government is, that it is a mediatorial government.

It is in the hands of Jesus, the Mediator between God and man; and it is exercised specially with reference to the great end of his mediatorial office, the redemption of man, and the reconciliation of the world to himself. This truth, though so often overlooked, shines with eminent lustre in the sacred page. The world was created expressly for the exhibition of the plan of redemption, and to be the scene of the dying love and regal triumphs of the Son of God. All things were made by him, and for him. Prophecy assigns to Jesus this honour: "I will make my First-born higher than the kings of the earth." "He shall have dominion from sea to sea; and from the river unto the ends of the earth." Christ himself claims this honour. "All power is given unto me," says he, "both in heaven and upon earth." And an apostle connects this event with a necessity arising out of the will and appointment of God: "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

It follows hence, that in the great changes which happen to nations, he that considers only how they may affect the balance of power, give countenance to or condemn certain political principles, or affect the interests of commerce, looks only at very inferior parts of the arrangements of Providence. He regards secondary ends, but overlooks designs which are bound up with the moral interests of man, and with his eternal condition.

Jesus governs the world with reference to the interests of his religion. If his truth be opposed, its opposers must be ultimately broken in pieces, like a potter's vessel, with a rod of iron. If a nation has stained its hands in the blood of his saints, it shall have blood to drink. If civil arrangements are hostile to the labours of his servants, calling men to the obedience of faith, they must be overthrown. If with the sanction of a nation infidelity shall blaspheme his holy name and right-

eous cause, that nation shall be marked out for signal punishment. But if his truth be honoured; if a nation welcome his religion, and pay him the homage which he claims; his received truth shall bring with it special political favours, and that nation shall wear in its prosperity the seal of his peculiar blessing.

We cannot exactly trace the connection between the political changes of nations, and the revenging of the injuries, or the rewarding of the respect, done to the truth of God. We need not wonder at this. Histories of the past have not been written on principles favourable to such inquiries. Myriads of events are unknown to us; and, above all, "clouds and darkness are round about him;" and there are "matters" of which, as yet, "he giveth no account." Nevertheless, enough is known, in the little information afforded us, to confirm us in this belief. In the trackless paths of Divine Providence, here and there, either justice or mercy has erected a monument, to indicate its course and direction. When the world was sinking into idolatry, then God formed the seed of Abraham into a nation: Jehovah triumphed over the gods of Egypt and Canaan. When the Jews apostatized, the ten tribes were scattered into hopeless captivity; but two were preserved to keep alive the knowledge of God. When they endured a temporary captivity, the pious among them scattered the seeds of truth through the great Babylonian empire; and its monarch was brought to the knowledge of the God of heaven. The diffusion of truth by these means raised the expectation of the Messiah in the world. Before the final dispersion of the Jews he had raised up the Christian Church, to be the depository of his oracles; and, since their dispersion, they have been witnesses to all nations of the truth of prophecy. The establishment of the Roman empire was favourable to the spread of Christianity through the civilized world. Its disruption by the northern hordes, from whom we are descended, issued in bringing their pagan myriads into the visible fold of Christ. Such have been the arrangements of Divine Providence,—and the present arrangements bear a similar character,—that it is worthy of note, that great political power is nowhere found in the world, but among Christian nations. Every pagan nation is weak as infancy. And it is still more remarkable, that the greatest commercial nations, whose pursuits bring them into contact with pagan countries every where, are Protestant nations, where Christianity exists in its purest forms. I need scarcely say, that all this evidently indicates an approach of that great end, the Christianizing of the world; and no doubt the changes in our day, among professing Christian nations themselves, as they are directed by the same mind, have the same end. We may glance at this subject again before we conclude; but were these indications less obvious, the truth would remain, that the power and the dominion are given to the Son of man; and they are employed, both in judgment and mercy, for the accomplishment of his great work, the recovery of the world to himself.

We invite your attention,

III. To those proofs of the doctrine, that "the Lord reigneth," which late occurrences have furnished.

In entering upon this part of our subject, it may be necessary to observe, that, as far as circumstances prove the Divine sovereignty, it is proved, not merely by active interpositions on the part of the Divine

Governor, but by his permission of certain evils. He is under no obligation of justice, at once to interpose, and check the evils to which the wickedness of man gives rise ; but he suffers them, on the contrary, to expend themselves in all their injurious consequences, that men may be taught wisdom by a bitter experience. This is no less a proof of the wisdom and care of his government than direct interposition.

This kind of permissive providence has marked the present age in two striking particulars.

1. The great evils of bigotry, and opposition to the rights of conscience, have been permitted to display themselves.

To these are to be attributed the birth and growth of that horrid system of infidelity which has fostered the root of all those miseries with which Europe for twenty years has been afflicted. Had not Louis the Fourteenth abolished liberty of conscience in France, for the purpose of suppressing Protestantism, infidelity could not have had that success. But in that country, and in others, while philosophical investigations, ultimately turned against all religion, were permitted, religious inquiry was forbidden. While philosophers were, under various forms, distributing the poison of unbelief, the simple preaching of the Gospel was prohibited. What was the consequence? Popery, that nominal and perverted form of Christianity, presented too thin a medium to arrest the destructive darts ; and the worst political as well as religious consequences ensued. As a contrast to this, we behold the value of religious liberty as exhibited in the history of our own country. Here the success of infidelity was comparatively small.—It had to meet the adamant of real Christianity. It was attacked with the sword of the Spirit, the Bible, and the preaching of the cross. Our religion was preserved ; and with that our public spirit, and our national integrity remained unbroken. The highest good, political and moral, has resulted to us ; and he is very unobservant who does not see in this, that the Lord who reigneth hath recorded, in the sight of all nations, that all coercion in matters of religion is a usurpation of his right, and must be followed by his curse.

2. God has permitted infidelity to display itself also in its full character for the warning and instruction of mankind.

In all ages Christianity has been brought into contest with some potent enemy ; and in this age it has been brought into contest with infidelity. That system, if system it may be called, has attempted to deprive the good man of his hope, by depriving him of his future existence, and of his God. It has endeavoured to give countenance to vice, by removing its fears. Its effects in individuals it is not difficult to trace. Where conscience is destroyed, and the sense of moral obligation obliterated, man is capable of the worst crimes ; and he commits them. This evil has been permitted to exhibit itself upon a large scale. We have seen it in the seat of government, invested with power ; and, though under a disguise, it may still be seen there. Thus emboldened, has it emblazoned vices, or virtues, before the world ? We have seen it arrayed in its attributes,—massacre and blood ; with liberty in its mouth, trampling upon the most sacred rights of man ; with peace on its tongue, making universal war. Swollen with excessive vanity, it has despised all lessons of experience, and thrown down all ancient institutions, to make room for its own Babel. It has given

rise to the grossest aggressions upon nations ; aimed at universal empire ; been guilty of the deepest perfidy ; and marked its track with horrid desolation. In great states it has been haughty ; in small ones, mean and cowering. In the one it pursued its projects with fraud and force ; in the other it has betrayed the most sacred national interest by treachery. This we have seen ; and we have also seen it punished in its very consequences. He who reigneth hath permitted it to exhibit the dreadful effects upon the happiness and interests of nations, as well as of individuals, that it might appear that "righteousness" only "exalteth a nation," with durable prosperity ; that moral strength only is political strength ; and that whatever advantages nations may obtain by defying both Divine and human laws, the edifice is reared on the sand, which must bury its builders beneath its ruins.

To these indications that "the Lord reigneth," from what he has permitted, let us turn to what he has done by special interposition ; to the mighty acts of the Lord in judgment and mercy.

1. God has preserved our country from invasion.

This was long the object of the enemy ; more than once his preparations were made for it ; and though some affected to ridicule the idea, many sober men judged the attempt practicable. Yet, as oft as a numerous army was gathered on the opposite shore, they were called off from the enterprise to engage in continental contests. In these contests the great end was still kept in view : in beating down other states, in excluding our commerce, in possessing himself of a vast extent of maritime coast, in calling the forces of so many nations round his standard, the enemy only acted upon a settled plan to complete our ruin. The conception was vast, the plan promising, the object tempting ; and success, for a long period, seemed to promise maturity to the scheme, and certainty to the execution. How little did that vain boaster know that God was with us ! How little did he understand the efficacy of those prayers which ascended daily to the Lord that reigneth ! How little did he comprehend of the plans of the gracious providence of Him who, looking upon his people, his worship, his Church in these lands, said, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it !" The mighty plan of the enemy is broken, and we are safe. We have been chastised in mitigated justice ; but we are safe. Our fields are unstained with blood, and our cities dwell in peace. "Blessed be the Lord God, who only doeth wondrous things ; and blessed be his glorious name for ever !"

2. God has interposed to punish persecuting and wicked nations.

The great weight of the distresses of the times has fallen upon nations of this description. Many of them have been deeply imbued with the blood of martyrs for the righteous cause of Christ ; in all of them vital religion has been discouraged ; and the Protestant Churches of the continent had departed from their first love. Infidelity, too, had been widely encouraged among them ; and many of them had incurred high degrees of political guilt, of which they had not repented. The wickedness of nations can be counteracted only in two ways : by the spread of religion, or by punishment. In this country our evils have been counteracted by the diffusion and encouragement of vital godliness ; and thus we have escaped the sword. On the continent, men did not repent of their evil deeds and hard speeches ; and God has asserted his honour in justice. A wicked nation, led by a man fitted by his

nature for the work, was made the instrument of chastisement; and they have drunk the cup of bitterness to its dregs. Here God reigneth. The obstinately wicked have been punished. Where is the innocent nation that has been involved in this confusion and distress?—Where is the nation that has humbled itself without finding deliverance? This apportioning of punishment to the wicked only could not take place, if the Lord did not reign who executeth judgment.

3. But, lastly, the wicked nation which has disturbed the earth,—and though made the instrument of God in punishing others, yet intended not this, but the gratification of its own lust of conquest and plunder,—has been marked out, in its turn, as the object of righteous retribution.

The whole compass of history presents not a more striking instance of Divine interposition than has taken place in the recent defeats and humiliations in the late ruler of France. In these occurrences how evident is it that “the Lord reigneth!” It is not long since he was in his plenitude of power and pride, marching at the head of a veteran army, more formidable in numbers and discipline than modern Europe ever beheld. His confidence was equal to his strength; and without respect to justice or providence, he poured the whole force of middle and southern Europe upon the north. No adequate human means existed to arrest his progress; but he had arrived at that point of arrogance which always, by a law of providence, touches upon disaster: here God himself interposes; and, by hastening a winter which set in with unremembered intensity, saved the empire of the north, and gave deliverance to Europe. The ostentatious mortal, marching at the head of his legions, which, to him, appeared invincible, had not considered those “treasures of snow and hail which God had reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war.”

How little is man! How weak the most powerful combinations of human power, when arrayed against God, against even those elements which he governs with such infinite ease. Dust was not lighter in the whirlwind, a dried leaf in a storm, than this formidable army before the blasts of the north. “He sendeth forth his ice like morsels. Who can stand before his cold?” See this mighty armament shrinking, trembling, and nerveless, yielding to despair and death, or falling without resistance into the hands of their pursuers! “The breath of the Lord,” to use the language of Scripture, “caused frost.” They were scattered, and few survivors remained to tell the tale of wo. Here the rod of the oppressor was broken; but not by human hand. All his subsequent disasters have been but the consequence of this; and he now sits trembling upon a tottering throne, anxious how his last cast will turn,—empire or a gibbet. “The Lord reigneth. He setteth up one, and putteth down another.”

His affairs appeared on the point of being retrieved; less, indeed, by his own genius than by the character which successive revolutions had stamped upon the nation which he governed. Swelled with pride, intoxicated with the love of military fame, and heaving with revenge, that nation again yielded its resources and its soldiers to the command of a leader in whose fortune they still had confidence. God was not acknowledged by any humiliations before him; every thing was seen and acknowledged but that which they ought to have seen and acknow-

ledged,—the lifted hand of God. This new armament was conducted to the contest with the same pomp of circumstance, the same self-confidence, the same defiance of just principles, which had preceded the former fall. It had the same result : the spirit of Europe, stung with wrongs, and awake to the magnitude of the interests put to issue, prevailed ; and Paris, which, like the Babylon of the prophet, sat as a queen, and said, “ I shall see no sorrow,” for the first time for ages covered before the triumphant waving of hostile banners. But the work was not done ; the calm that followed was deceitful. Never was a cause more sacred than that which banded the allies against the oppression of France ; and never was a sacred cause more honoured than by the godlike attributes of mercy and forbearance which gave double lustre to their bravery and success. But that punishment which the mercy of Europe spared France, and which would have been no more than a righteous retribution of its own wrongs, was permitted by providence to be brought upon that country by its own guilty passions, and its uncorrected faithlessness. God was still unacknowledged ; and the bad principles which had directed all the successful and unsuccessful aggressions of France, were still unrenounced ; they lifted up their heads with confidence, and none branded them with the scar of infamy. Another storm was gathering ; it accumulated unseen by the world, until it darted above the horizon, and spreads its shadow, pregnant with ruin, over the nations. France again displayed before the world her moral deterioration, her utter destitution of all those principles which hold society together, and which are the only pledges of the harmony of the world. Renouncing her rightful and pacific sovereign, she again rallied round the banner of the imperial exile, for no reason of civil freedom or domestic amelioration ; for none of those pleas which, in extreme cases, may justify a change in the succession to a crown ; but for the open, undisguised purpose of asserting her military rank, and of recovering her unhallowed conquests. She again declared war against the independence and security of the world : but her hour was fully come ; and it was reserved principally to the agency of Great Britain to close the contest of a quarter of a century, and to bring the desolation, we would hope, to a perpetual end. Never, indeed, has a nation been exhibited in so sublime an attitude as our country, during the long struggle which is but just terminated. Her sword was never drawn but in a just cause, to defend her own rights, or to sustain those of Europe ; stemming with unshaken constancy the dreadful tide which had so long rolled against her ; fixing her foot on the right, and putting her trust in God. Never did country come out of a contest so purified, shining with so clear a lustre. During this eventful period her religious character has advanced ; on every shore she has fixed some monument of her pious zeal, or compassionate charity. Sustaining with one hand the hope of a sinking continent, with the other she has been scattering the seeds of immortal truth and life through the world ; and though engaged in war, she has made it sufficiently plain that she has been engaged in it from necessity, not choice ; for defence, and not for aggression. Hers was the honour to inflict the last, the fatal, blow, we will not say upon the despotism of one man, for that is little in comparison, but upon an organized system of war, oppression, and riot. In that deathful day of glory, blood, and sorrow, when the in-

terests of the world trembled in the balance, the God of battles crowned the British banners with the wreath of triumph; peace, the noblest fruit of victory, was won; and the earth is quiet. Nor is it the least grateful of our reflections, that our army, whose exploits will form the brightest page in our history, are withdrawn from the soil of the conquered with their laurels unstained by either cruelty or rapine; that their humanity and moderation have been made as conspicuous as their bravery; and that they return to receive the applause of their country, after having extorted that of their enemies. France, stripped of the spoils of conquered nations, the food of her vanity, humbled and burdened, is left to ruminate over the past, and to ponder the lessons which Providence has written for her instruction in her blood and sufferings. Our prayer is, that, from these judgments, she may learn righteousness.

The whole proves, that, however God may be forgotten, however long iniquity may triumph, however loud the voice of blasphemy may be raised, He that is higher than the heavens is mightier than they. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice."

Yield, then,

IV To the demand which is made upon our grateful joy: "Let the earth be glad."

As Christians, we shall rejoice with holy joy, not with vain mirth. God will be sanctified in his worshippers.

We should rejoice, too, with trembling. Much is given to us, and much is required. Both as individuals, and in our national capacity, our responsibility is great; and the consequences of unfaithfulness are frightful and appalling.

Let us rejoice with charity: give to the distressed, who are embarrassed by the disorder introduced into the commercial world even by the return of peace.

If we are individually interested in Him that reigneth, we may well rejoice; for all the perfections of the Godhead are engaged in our behalf; he will guide us by his counsel, and afterward receive us to glory.

SERMON CII.—*Ezekiel's Vision.*

Preached in the City Road Chapel, October 17, 1830.

"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God," Ezek. i. 1.

EZEKIEL was among the many Jews who were carried away captive into the land of the Chaldeans, several years before the general captivity; and while Jeremiah in Judea was predicting the scourge and the storm which should finally desolate the land of their fathers, and the city of their God, he was employed in the same service among the captives by the river of Chebar. But his prophetic visions respected many other countries beside Judea: he predicted the fate of Egypt, Amalek, Edom, with other neighbouring states; all of which fell before the mighty sweep, the sanguinary march, of the Babylonian

power. Still more distant scenes than these the spirit of prophecy opened to him, and his eye glanced over all those changes of nations, which have been taking place from that day to this, and which shall still continue to take place, until the concluding part of his prophecy be accomplished; till the new temple, the enlarged Church of God, shall be built in all its vast extent, and all the nations of the earth shall flow into it.

To prepare the prophet for these wonderful revelations and scenes, and symbolically to present to him the principle of the Divine government, and the agencies which are employed in it, while he was among the captives by the river Chebar, about two hundred miles distant from Babylon itself, he was inducted into the prophetic office by a vision of peculiar magnificence, of sublime and even awful glory. A whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire enfolding itself. Living creatures appear, bearing the appropriate and symbolic forms of the cherubim. The vast and complicated wheels of a mystic chariot come into view, attended by these celestial beings; flashes of lightning, "careering fires between;" the voice of the Almighty; the noise as of a host; the appearance of a throne, and one sitting upon it; a firmament intensely bright, "clear as the terrible crystal;" and the bending of a rainbow about the throne;—this, as he tells us, "was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."

In all these instances of what may be called prophetic machinery, there is doubtless a meaning; they were designed to enunciate great truths; truths, too, which terminated, not with the prophet's own day, but have reached to us; and though we may not be able completely to unfold the depths of their meaning, enough, nevertheless, is obvious, in these extraordinary symbols, to teach us what is at all times important. They do so at all times; but perhaps the vision of this chapter may be considered as having a special correspondence with the period in which we live, and the events which are taking place around us. We live in an age of change and tumult. Subverted thrones astonish the world by the sound of their fall; the nations heave and are unquiet, and the floods of the people toss themselves; light and darkness contend; signs of great good and fearful evil are conspicuous; and society is moved in strong and rapid tides, to issues which none can predict, but which may well fix the attention of the most profound and discerning minds. What then? In the midst of all this shall we see nothing but man? Is there not a God that ruleth and judgeth in the earth? There is; and the design of such visions as that which this chapter contains is especially to lead us from earth to heaven, from visible to invisible agency; in one word, from man to God, that we may fear before him, and put our trust under the shadow of his wings. I shall, therefore, call your attention to the well-known vision of this chapter; a vision which may be epitomized as a representation of the march of God in the chariot of his providence, through the successive ages of the world, accompanied by his angels, who excel in strength; his ministers, who are as a flaming fire, and who do all his pleasure; arrayed in the attributes of his own majesty, and yet, at the same time, commingling these fearful glories with the milder displays of his condescension and love.

This vision, to which the first verse is introductory, has three prin-

cipal scenes : the vision of the four living creatures, or the cherubim ; the vision of the chariot moving on its complicated wheels ; and the vision of the throne, and him that sat upon it. We have,

I. The vision of the living creatures, or cherubim.

These are among the first objects that present themselves. A whirlwind came out of the north, emblematical of the mighty sweep of invisible agency, which carries away that which appears most firm upon earth ; a great cloud, always portentous of Divine judgments, and impending calamity ; a fire enfolding itself, striking its fearful flashes behind and before, indicating the fierce and rapid execution of the judgment of God ; a brightness round about, a milder lustre, to intimate the clear and delightful calm in which the whole shall issue, and the more beautiful revelations which shall finally be made to our world. And then, out of these appearances came forth, we are informed, “ the likeness of four living creatures.” The prophet gives a somewhat detailed description of their appearance, and their movements. “ They had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet ; the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot : and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides ; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another ; they turned not when they went ; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side : and they four had the face of an ox on the left side ; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces. And their wings were stretched upward ; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And they went every one straight forward. Whither the Spirit was to go, they went ; and they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire and like the appearance of lamps : it went up and down among the living creatures ; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.” Two remarks upon this part of the vision seem to be suggested to us.

The first is, that God in part carries on the affairs of the government of this world by the ministry of angels. I know that, in this infidel age, all these supernatural interpositions are scoffed at, as below the wisdom, but, in fact, above the folly, of human philosophy. This, however, is the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, from the beginning to the end : the whole Bible is full of it. When God excluded our first parents from paradise, he set a guard of cherubim there, to keep the way of the tree of life. When the patriarch had committed the direction of his way, and the keeping of his interests, to God in prayer, he was favoured with a vision of a continual intercourse of angels between heaven and earth. When the first-born in Egypt were smitten, it was by the hand of a destroying angel ; for they are ministers of judgment as well as mercy. When the Assyrian host perished, it was by the stroke of the hand of a being of the same order. When our Lord was to rise again, angels rolled away the stone from the sepulchre. When apostles were to be delivered from prison, an angel

was commissioned upon the errand. The whole of the splendid machinery of the book of Revelation is constructed upon this principle. Continually they are bursting forth from the darkness and obscurity of the invisible world, and appearing as the high commissioned ministers of God. Why such beings are entrusted with such a commission, we know not. Why they are appointed to protect and keep the righteous, and to mark or destroy the wicked; how, on a large scale, they assist the counsels of nations, and in judgment often perplex them; how they calm the minds, and quell the risings of collective bodies of men, and how they excite and rouse them into indescribable energy; how they control the elements, alter the seasons, and make use of inferior beings as the instruments of accomplishing the purposes of God; how all this is, we are not yet permitted to know. It is enough for us to know that such is the doctrine: all these high powers are the servants of God, and are all joined to the chariot of his providence. All their powers are consecrated to his service. They four had the face of a man, indicating intelligence; of a lion, indicating courage and strength; of an ox, signifying laborious and enduring perseverance; and of an eagle, denoting high, and rapid, and sustained flight. They stretched their wings to show their readiness for action; and when they go, having received their commission, they turn not, performing the Divine will without deviation. Whither the Spirit was to go, they went, continually obeying the directions, and accomplishing the purposes of a higher power. They perform their appointed task with the resistless force and speed of lightning; and when they have executed one commission, they rapidly return, and wait for new instructions, letting down their wings till the voice from the firmament again appoints them to service, and they run, and return, and once more wait. This is a magnificent and beautiful, but at the same time an instructive emblem. Thus in our lower sphere ought we to serve God, with wings outstretched, ready to act, moving in an undeviating conformity to the rule of God's revealed will; while, having derived strength from immediate fellowship with God, we should carry that strength into action, and then return, and abide again with God, and derive strength for other and higher services. So God "maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire."

But the second remark which this suggests to us is, that this subserviency of angels, in all their energies and powers, to the purposes of the Divine providence, is but emblematical of the subserviency of every other agency to fulfil the purposes of God. "All are his servants." So we may say of every creature upon earth, of every element of nature, of every being. Wherever there is wisdom, "the face of a man;" wherever there is courage and strength, "the face of a lion;" wherever there is laborious and enduring perseverance, "the face of an ox;" wherever there is the power of high and sustained flight, "the face of an eagle;" whatever quality there is in creatures for judgment or mercy, for good or for evil, willing or unwilling, conscious of their employment, or ignorant of it; yet do all these serve him. They all stand with their wings stretched; whether sickness or health, life, death, quiet, trouble, wars, pestilences, famines, all stand ready to execute his commission; all go straight forward in it; all return when it is accomplished, let down their wings, and wait

for new orders from the voice from the firmament above. Behold, all these are the servants of God; they accomplish, as he appoints them, the purposes of his justice and of his mercy. My brethren, what practical conclusion can we draw from this, but the necessity, the blessedness, of friendship with God? If God is against us, who, then, can be for us, when the whole universe of creatures and of circumstances do his will, and serve his purposes? And if God be for us, who can be against us? "When he giveth quietness, who can make trouble? And when he hideth his face, who can behold him, whether it be to a nation, or to one only?"

In this prophetic representation we have,

II. The vision of the wheels.

The wheels are described as having "the colour of a beryl," the colour of the azure heavens, the beautiful emblem of unbroken uniformity, as well as of unclouded majesty; as being complicated and involved in their structure, "a wheel in the middle of a wheel;" and as being of vast circumference, "their rings were so high that they were dreadful" to behold; and "they were full of eyes round about" their face. These are the great wheels of the majestic chariot of Divine Providence; for they were moved by the same Spirit which was in the living creatures.

In the first place, as wheels, they intimate to us the various changes and revolutions of earth: for, as it is by the motion of wheels that the chariot is propelled, so it is by the various changes of earthly interests, arrangements, and powers, that the Divine Being marches to the accomplishment of his vast and wonderful designs. That such changes have taken place in former ages, and that the designs of God, both in judgment and mercy, have been accomplished by them, we know. He has punished ancient proud nations; he has interfered to destroy idolatry; he has delivered his Church from her enemies, or he has placed it in the furnace of affliction: all this has been accomplished by earthly changes. And these changes must go on: we conclude this from the ultimate designs of God in reference to our world. We know what these designs are: his design is, that truth, the truth of the Gospel, shall be freely and universally proclaimed; that Christ shall be universally believed in and adored; that the purity, and justice, and kindness of his religion shall influence all the institutions of society; that all public vice shall be suppressed; that all public oppression and wrong shall be removed; that all nations, in a word, shall be blessed in Christ; that is, be brought into an enlightened, a holy, and a happy condition, by the influence of his Gospel. But if such be the firm and settled purpose of God, what changes must yet take place, and necessarily so! Thus has he hitherto carried on his wonderful operations: the sweep of these mighty wheels has passed over all the high pride and glory of ancient states; thus passed they over the prostrated pomp of Egypt, of Assyria, of the four successive great monarchies: and they have moved along, and left deep traces of their march in still more modern times, upon powers ripe for chastisement or destruction; and the crash of thrones and states has been heard in all ages, and sounds even in our own ears. And if such have been in all ages the methods of the Divine procedure, what changes must even yet take place before the world is what God designs it to

be, and what the sure word of prophecy declares that one day it shall be! If his truth is to be fully and universally published, most certain it is, that all those powers shall be put down which attempt to restrain it by intolerant and persecuting laws. If error is to be universally banished, its papal and Mohammedan advocates must be put down; and the factious, infidel, apostate, and anti-christian band, raising their systems of error, dark as the smoke of the bottomless pit, to hide the sun of heavenly truth, and wrap the earth in shadows deeper than midnight,—all these must be swept away. If a perfect right, adjusting all the relations of society, must be established, so that all shall be in harmonious co-operation for the general good, what revolutions in every part,—in the low as well as in the high ranks, in private as well as public life,—does not this suppose! And if all oppression and wrong are to be put down, what must become of those combinations of men who would rivet for ever the fetters of the slave, and claim the very right to deface the sacred image of God in man by their cruelty and pride?

But let us not mistake. All these changes are not to be violent and tumultuous: every turn of the wheels is not in judgment: that is the error of many. The wheels move in mercy as well as judgment, and sometimes in both mixed; they are complicated; there was the appearance as of a wheel within a wheel. There are milder and more gradual, though not less powerful and beneficial, changes than any of these; more beneficial than those resulting from any alteration in the external form and condition of society, from the change of dynasties, and the different adjustment of the balance of power among nations: there are the mild and beneficial changes produced by the arts, by science, by education, by commerce, by civilization, and, above all, by the revival of the religion of Christ in old countries, and its introduction into new. Great mistakes are sometimes made here. I see greater changes produced by the late revival of religion in England, infinitely more beneficial and permanent, than if there had been a political revolution every month: by its revival and extension changes have been produced,—silently it may be, and without observation and the pomp of circumstance,—changes more vast, and sublime, and permanently beneficial, than would have been produced though this world's dynasties and establishments had been changed from generation to generation. Look at the islands of the South Sea: Christianity has been introduced there; and you note the track of the wheels in their noiseless move in the unnumbered blessings—temporal and spiritual—which have sprung up with such rapidity and luxuriance. But where the call of God is disobeyed, and his truth resisted; where men will build up some proud tower against the Lord, cementing it by their interests and wisdom, propping it by their strength, adorning it by their honours, and identifying themselves with it; there shall be the vast sweep of these mighty wheels, God shall overturn their tower, and make their Babel a heap to all generations. If men will not listen to the voice of God, and yield to the principles established by his word, as its light and truth are streaming forth throughout society, then let them look for his judgments: through all the combinations that oppose his plans he will pass, and make of them a full end. For many such events as these we ought to stand prepared: hear the word

of the Lord to his Church : "Be still, and know that I am God." Let the men of the world enter with all their soul, with feelings passionate and ardent, into their worldly plans ; but let the Christian know his duty. "Be still, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the heathen ; I will be exalted in the earth."

The second particular as to these mystic and emblematical wheels is, that their form was involved : "The appearance of a wheel in the middle of a wheel." This would often produce the appearance of perplexed and even retrograde motion ; but yet, it is added, with much emphasis, twice or thrice in the vision, that "they went straight forward ; whither the Spirit was to go they went, and they turned not when they went." We are instructed by this how to interpret various intricate and mysterious providences, both as to ourselves and the world. The form of the wheel is often involved, and its movements are intricate and seemingly contrary. It is so sometimes in personal experience. "All these things are against me," said Jacob ; till at last he could bear a different testimony, how straight forward the wheels of a beneficent Providence had gone in his case, when he acknowledged that the angel had redeemed him from all his adversities. Doubtless a similar feeling must have impressed Joseph : wherever he turned, the wheel seemed not only intricate in structure and perplexed movement, but even in opposition to the general direction in which a vision had informed him the providence of God would proceed ; until he at last found that the road to honour was humility, and that the affliction of Joseph was the salvation of the family. So there are many other interesting Scriptural examples of this. And then, as to nations, are not the Scriptures also full of examples in this respect ? And I would refer to these interesting examples, because they were put into the page of the infallible record, in order that they might be so applied. Take, as a remarkable instance, the case of the Israelites after God had, with a high hand, brought them out of the land of Egypt : you naturally would have thought that he would have carried them straight forward through the wilderness, especially as you find them on the very brink of Jordan, and that they should have possessed the land immediately. Not so ; they are all turned back again, and are made to continue in the wilderness for forty years ; so intricate were the motions of the wheels, and apparently so retrograde ; yet how straight forward was the whole proceeding ! The intentions of God were to cut off, in the wilderness, that generation which was infected by the base idolatry of Egypt, being unfit to bear his name among the Gentile nations of Canaan, and to prepare a new race, trained up by his own holy discipline, to establish his worship, and to proclaim him as the only God to the heathen : and the end was answered.

Now, the reason why we are so often perplexed with God's designs, as to nations and to ourselves, is because we can see only a little way as to the bearings and connections of many parts of the Divine proceedings with others ; the compass of our observation is small, our field of vision very contracted ; we see things only in part, we see them separate from each other ; we see the beginning, with the past we are scarcely able to connect it, and as to the future all is dark. But the designs of God are lofty, and reach far ; this is intimated to us by the form of the wheels : "They were so high that they were

dreadful," producing from their height a feeling of awe, such as we experience when we look up to the vast arch and span of the heavens above us. Such was the ring, the circumference of the wheels; they comprehend all things in their sweep, so vast, so majestic, and so sublime. The plans of God reach from the beginning to the end of time; they pass the limits of time, and issue in eternity: this is the reason why we are often perplexed; but let us recollect that, notwithstanding, every thing is going straight forward, and that "the wheels turn not as they go." If thou art a man of God, be of good cheer, and trust in the Divine Providence; every thing in God's dealings as to thee is going on to the final and glorious issue of thy salvation, thy complete, and perfect, and eternal salvation; there is no variableness nor shadow of turning with him; the motion of the wheels is straight forward. And thus it has been from the foundation of the world: God, subordinating every thing to the counsel of his own will, has been making every thing, whether bright or dark, whether forward or apparently retrograde in its movements, to accomplish more fully and illustriously his great and glorious designs. The apostle, referring to this view of the subject, which had so highly excited his admiration, in the close of the eleventh chapter to the Romans, speaking of the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, has these remarkable expressions: "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief, even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Thus high are the wheels, thus complicated their movements; but their advance is steady and certain; with apparently alternate depressions and elevations they still move on; nor shall they pause in their career of wisdom and might till the plans of God, as to the world, are all completed, and have issued in the everlasting rest and Sabbath of heaven.

But there is a third particular in the description of these mystic wheels: they "were full of eyes round about" the whole circle of them. This natural symbol is of easy interpretation, and conveys a most instructive truth. The events of time are all directed by an infinite intelligence; there is an end, a design, in every turn of providence; every movement of the wheel has an object, and to that object do the eyes never cease to look. Our revelation excludes all chance from the affairs of the universe; let them seek for comfort in chance who think they can find it there; our Bible excludes it; in the government of God no caprice, no unmeaning acts, can be found; every thing is directed by wisdom, and controlled by justice or mercy; there is not an event, great or small, brought about by the motions of these immense wheels, but it has its peculiar design, whether as to private individuals or nations. The wheels have "eyes round about:" the turns may be various and complicated, but still the eyes are there. In all the dispensations of Divine Providence, whether as to nations or individuals, there is an end, a design; and to understand this is a great part of the practical knowledge of man. In the turnings and changings of this mighty providence of God, have your hopes been frus-

trated, and your plans blasted? The eyes are there; there is an end to which this movement looks of instruction, admonition, and reproof, lessons deeply important for you to learn. Have these turnings brought about some unexpected deliverance, some signal mercy? The eyes are there too; there is a reference to some great practical end, to quicken thy zeal, to rouse thy gratitude, and to make obedience the effect of an increasingly excited and strengthened devotion. Have the turns of these wheels raised you to some circumstances of greater honour and influence? The eyes are there; there is an end to be answered; new talents are committed to thy trust; and for the five as well as for the two, and for the two as well as for the one, account must be given unto God; and all these are to be consecrated to the service of God, and employed for his glory. Have these wheels driven over and crushed your comforts, and joys, and best earthly interests? Still are the eyes there. Perhaps the whole design has not been manifested, and there may be much of mystery yet; but thou art called, by this dispensation, from earth; thou art reminded that this is not thy rest. Have these wheels, instinct with Divine wrath, turned on some careless, sinful man, and swept him away in his wickedness? The eyes are there. This is a solemn and impressive warning to others, an admonition against delays, against saying, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee." What Christ says unto one he says unto all, by the consideration of the uncertain term of human life: "Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh."

And it is so as to nations. All the various turnings of his providential dispensations, as to communities, have a certain end. The eyes are there. Advantages are given to be improved. Wars, famines, pestilences, are all the judgments of God which he brings upon nations, whether for their correction or destruction. In all there are ends to be answered, lessons to be taught. The Prophet Isaiah supposes this to be so plain, that he complains, "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see;" intimating that they might see, but will not; that their blindness is wilful. There is so wonderful an indication in every blessing that piety is approved, and in every judgment so striking a reproof of sin; the correspondence between the blessing and the duty, the punishment and the sin, is so clearly manifested, whatever else of mystery there may be, that the man must be wilfully blind who will not perceive that there are eyes in the wheels, and that they are continually contemplating and approaching the same great end.

O how impressive a revelation of the Divine government do these views present! In all the dispensations of God, whether as to individuals or communities, there are wise intentions, important designs; the object of them is something practical; so that we may say of providence, as we say of the inspired volume, that it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." This extraordinary vision refers,

III. To the throne of God, and him that sitteth upon it. "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it."

You have been looking below ; but you are now called to look above. The movements of all this prophetic machinery were on earth ; but stretched forth over their heads above there was a "firmament," an expanse. And this firmament was all bright and glorious. The likeness of it "was as the colour of the terrible crystal." It was refulgent and dazzling. On earth there was the great cloud, and the rushing whirlwind, and the careering fires, flashing forth from the darkness, and returning to the darkness again, and the mighty wheels, with their complicated motions. Every thing was perplexing, dark, and terrific. But above,—all was bright there ; to instruct us that, whatever may appear to us dark in these earthly scenes, all is light with God. However perplexed we may be as to our own individual path, we may still say, "Thou knowest the way that I take." And with respect to the world, whatever clouds hang over it, whatever storms rush forth from them, God dwelleth in light ; all his dispensations are full of wisdom ; nor is there the possibility of error. And all is as pure and holy in that firmament as it is bright and glorious. Well may it appear "terrible" to sinful men. The seraphim veil their faces before the glory of his holiness : let man feel his own vileness, abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes.

"And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne." We see but one throne, one Ruler, however multiplied the agencies which are employed. We are thus taught that every thing is governed by one power, one will, one infinitely perfect God. Here is the resting place to which the Scriptures lead us,—*"The Lord reigneth."* The floods may lift up their voice, and toss their waves ; but *"the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."* He *"sitteth upon the floods ; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever and ever."* That is sufficient for us. Let us be in friendship with him, and what need we fear ? Here the ancient saints found rest ; and here, amidst all the changes and troubles of life, we may find it too. The noble, the all-inspiring language of David may be ours : *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled. The Lord of hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge."* There are, however, two circumstances, crowning the whole vision, on which I would chiefly dwell.

The first is, that *"upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it."* *"The appearance of a man."* This is remarkable. When Moses and the elders of Israel saw the glory of God on Mount Sinai, they saw no similitude of any kind. And why ? God was then giving his law ; and law is in itself independent of any plan of redemption. He who came down on Mount Sinai, came down as Sovereign and Lawgiver ; and therefore all was authority and right, all majesty and justice. There was no similitude there. But here, there is the appearance of a man ; here, in connection with the great plans of Divine Providence. And what are we taught by this ? What, but that there is a reference to the incarnation ; and that it is Christ, the incarnate God, to whom is given all power in heaven and earth ? So that there are two great doctrines

in Scripture in reference to the government of the world : the first is, that it is governed by God ; the second is,—and as sinners we are all deeply interested in this,—that it is governed by the great Mediator, the God-man. He who died for us, governs us. Such is the ground of trust as to the Christian, and of hope as to the world. Now this doctrine throws light upon several important points. It shows us how it is that the miseries of men are so mingled with mercy. That there is much misery in the world,—misery in nations, and misery among individuals,—we know and feel too well. And yet, with all this misery, there is mercy. As to nations, even when they were wicked and idolatrous, God never left himself without a witness, but sent them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and did them good, filling their hearts with food and gladness. Individuals, too, though they bear the marks of the Divine displeasure in their afflictions, diseases, and mortality, yet have mercy mingled with their trouble. There is health as well as sickness ; there is enjoyment and comfort as well as affliction. How is this to be explained ? If man be in favour with God, how do you account for his miseries ? If he be under wrath, unmingled wrath, how do you account for his mercies ? You can only account for it on the principle now before us. There was the appearance of a man on the throne, even of the Man who died for us ; thus illustrating the fact, that, though man be under condemnation as a sinner, still he is redeemed, and the object of mercy. Our mixed condition answers to the mixed relations in which we stand to God. Take another case. How is it that God's judgments are so connected with repentance ? Why do they yield upon the sinner's repentance and faith ? Strict law does not admit of this ; and yet such is the fact. If, when God speaks concerning a nation, to pluck up and destroy, that nation repent, and turn from its wickedness, God shall repent him of the evil which he thought to do to it. And if a sinful man, who is therefore under wrath, humble himself before God, there is an ear which receives every sigh of repentance, and a hand to administer pardon to the humble and contrite. How is this ? There is the appearance of a man upon the throne, which, terrible as it is in some of its demonstrations, is sprinkled with atoning blood : and though there is wrath, yet, "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The invitation to seek him while he may be found, and to call on him while he is near, is to you all ; for there is the man upon the throne. And then, this goes to illustrate another point ; that is, that since the government of the world is in the hands of a Saviour, the final issue, the grand design, of that government, both as to individuals and the world, is salvation. It is so as to you. You may turn it, by carelessness, and unbelief, and wilful rejection of Christ, to another issue ; but blame not the bowels of Deity for this. God rules you to save you ; and it is a delightful doctrine, as to a good man, that he is put on a course of discipline under the administration of Christ, and that every thing becomes a means of grace to him : not merely the means of grace, as we call them, directly so, the Sabbaths and ordinances of God, and the communion of saints, and a thousand other direct and blessed means of spiritual edification ; but there is a covenant which assures to him the benefit of every dispensation ; and all things are to work together for

good to them that love God. Every thing is a step in the process of this great discipline, and designed to strengthen principle, to quicken affection, to make the man of God perfect, fitting every man for his place in heaven; the place which God designs him to fill in the beautiful order of the heavenly hierarchy. O what a blessing to rejoice in the benefits of life, and to bear its troubles with patience! There is a Man upon the throne; one who was troubled and afflicted; who wept and bled; who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. And so it is as to the world. The great design of God is to rescue it from falsehood, and sin, and Satan, and to set upon it the crown of glory and purity. And to this, therefore, every thing is made to move. And when the wheels have fulfilled **their** revolutions, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall behold it together. A grand moral lesson is to be taught to future ages by the light of God's word thrown upon all his past dispensations. Prophecy shall be seen in its fulfilment. Attention will thus be fixed on the word, its evidences acquire irresistible force, and the influence of revealed truth be mightier than ever.

And then, there is a rainbow about the throne. "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about." The rainbow was the sign of God's covenant of mercy with Noah, and is therefore one symbol of the covenant of grace. The same imagery is employed in the Revelation. John beheld a throne set in heaven, and one that sat on the throne; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. There is a covenant of mercy and peace made with man; and as the rainbow shines upon the darkest cloud, so upon the cloud of this present state may the Christian see this radiant sign of the Divine mercy, the covenant which God has made with you, that he will be to you a God, and that you shall be to him a people. Fraught as the cloud may be with thunder, flashing as it may be with lightning, and pouring out its descending floods, yet the sign of promise and of peace is upon it. O thou troubled and tossed with tempest, look up to God, and in the darkest scenes rejoice in his government. Look above the cloud to the bright firmament, and the Man upon the throne, and the rainbow round about it. And so as to the Church and the world. The whirlwind may come, and the great cloud, and the fire enfolding itself; but there is the throne, and the brightness round about it is "as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain." The covenant is sure. Truth and holiness shall triumph. The kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ. Give not way, therefore, to desponding thoughts. God will remember his covenant. The rainbow is in the cloud, the sign of the retiring tempest, and of coming brightness and calm.

What, then, shall we learn from the whole? As I have already said, to seek above all things the favour and friendship of God. What is all other friendship without this? As I have said before, to listen always to the voice of his providence, and to observe the eye of the wheels whenever they turn to us, and however they turn; to get into the Church of God, the ark, which he engages to carry safely through the waves of this world, and to conduct finally to the haven of ever-

lasting peace. Seek for yourselves an interest in all the perfections and gracious plans of a reconciled and redeeming God, that it may always be well with you. And fear not for his cause. That shall prosper; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Fear you for his Church? Look to the bright firmament, serenely spread above the great cloud and the whirlwind, and see the throne there, and the Man that sitteth upon it. He shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

SERMON CIII.—*The Priesthood of Christ.*

“And having a High Priest over the house of God,” Heb. x, 21.

THIS important epistle may be called the Leviticus of the New Testament; it treats of the Christian sacrifice, the Christian priesthood, and the remission of purging away of sin. In this view it occupies a most important place, and fills up what would otherwise be a large chasm, in the canon of the new dispensation.

In the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, the apostle treats of justification, the effect of the Divine atonement for sin, made by the sacrifice of Christ; in other epistles he speaks of the privileges and duties of Christians, which are likewise the result of the atonement; here he speaks of the atonement itself, and of the priesthood by which it was administered. From this inspired book we learn in what sense “the law was a shadow of good things to come,” and how the Gospel has embodied and substantiated that shadow, presenting to us, in the body of Christ, the full, perfect, sufficient oblation and sacrifice which he offered for the sins of the whole world. The Divine authority and absolute obligation of Christianity are here proclaimed, and the words of the original commission faithfully re-echoed: “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

The subject which I have selected from this epistle, to occupy our present attention, is the priesthood of Christ; and that we are all deeply interested in it, will, I am sure, be demonstrated to us, with clearer and still clearer evidence, the more we meditate upon it. It is that office upon which the saving efficacy of the rest depends. His teachings concern us only as his blood has obtained for us the power to avail ourselves of them; for what would light be without influence, but a discovery of remediless misery? And his government would be one of unmixed majesty and terror, were not his throne made a throne of grace, by the sprinkling of atoning blood, and the dominion of the world placed in the hands of a Mediator.

The doctrine of the text and of the epistle is, that Christianity has a real priesthood, including, necessarily, sacrifice for sin, and intercession for the guilty. I shall attempt to show that this is the principal doctrine of the Gospel. Its importance we may perhaps the most forcibly exhibit, by considering the consequences which follow upon the denial of it, and upon reducing Christianity, as too many have done, to a system of morals.

I. The denial of the proper priesthood of Christ breaks the interesting and instructive connection between the Old and New Testaments.

The Bible is to be considered as a whole ; this is the only view in which it can be contemplated. It is not a congeries of distinct and unconnected revelations ; but a series of successive displays of the counsel and will, the mercy and grace, of God ; this it professes to be, and we cannot dispute it. Copiously, therefore, as the Christian system is announced in the New Testament, it depends, in no inconsiderable degree, upon the Old for many proofs of its authority, and illustrations of its doctrine. No reason can be given for this, but that the Christian institute is the consummation of former dispensations : they are the elements, this is the modified and collected substance ; the types, the predictions of former dispensations, were the things which answer to "the heavenly patterns," and to the fulfilled prophecy of Christianity ; and thus the connection between both is established.

This connection is so intimate, that the apostles find no difficulty in using the language of precedent figurative and ceremonial dispensations, when explaining the nature of Christianity ; it is that, indeed, with which the Spirit of God furnished them as the only medium by which full and accurate notions of Christian doctrine could be conveyed ; and let it never be forgotten, that the words they used were "words," as the apostle expresses it, "which the Holy Ghost taught."

In the use of sacrificial terms, especially, the apostles are profuse : the cross of Christ they speak of as an altar ; the person of Christ as a lamb ; his death as a sin-offering ; his ascension as an entry into the most holy place ; and his ministry there as a propitiatory intercession. And what can all this mean ? Does it mean that there is, between the two dispensations, a mere correspondence of allusion and metaphor ? which allusions and metaphors, on the principles of those who deny the sacrifice of Christ, would be the most incongruous imaginable, and such as no man of sense could have used. Far be it from us to impute such misleading folly to the Spirit of wisdom and truth : the correspondence in question was true and real, like the correspondence between the impression and the seal, and between the substance and the shadow. The language used by the apostles proves that, in their estimation, Christianity has a true sacrifice and a real priesthood ; for they present the two Testaments as mutual comments upon each other.

But give up the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ, and the connection is broken : there can be no types in the Old Testament, and nothing to correspond with them in the New ; there can be no Redeemer in the Old Testament, for there is no redemption, no purchasing with a price, in the New : nor, indeed, can the connection between the prophecies in the one, and the fulfilment in the other, be preserved ; for there is a long class of prophecies unfulfilled in Jesus if he be not a sacrifice, and he wants this large proof of Messiahship. The prophets speak of "the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow ;" but they speak of his sufferings not merely as facts that would occur, but as vicarious and sacrificial ; and if the atonement of his death be denied, no longer can we turn with triumph to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, as demonstrating at once the Messiahship of Jesus

and the true design of his death : "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

So complete a disruption would be made by the denial of this doctrine, in the beautiful connection of our Scriptures. They might shine as stars of different magnitude, enlightened by the same sun, but they would move in distinct orbits ; whereas the connection is founded upon infallible testimony ; the lights are not two, but one. The narrow crescent of the patriarchal moon increased through the Mosaic age to its full, as we now behold it. Revelation is the glow of an early morning, shining to the perfect day. The foundation of the building was laid in the patriarchal ages ; and it rose to the completion when, by the ascension of Christ, he became the head of the corner, and gave the weight and beauty of his majesty to give stability and ornament to the building. All the Scriptures testify of him ; to him give all the prophets witness : as our great High Priest, Christ was seen with Moses and Elias, who "spake with him of his decease," which he was about to "accomplish at Jerusalem." They had looked forward to his day, not with curiosity merely, but with lively interest, as to the consummation of that sacrifice of which theirs were but the types ; and their faith in that alone was imputed to them for righteousness.

II. As the connection between the two Testaments would be broken by the denial of the priesthood of Christ, so the harmony between the different dispensations of revealed religion to man would be destroyed.

Such a harmony was to be expected in revelations coming from God. The views of man are often essentially different. The views of a finite intelligence may change ; because better information, or more attentive study, may detect the errors of former conceptions. But one of the glorious attributes of God is, that he is the same, without variableness or shadow of turning. If his revelations are the emanations of his wisdom, they must, in principle, be ever the same, and, like himself, without variableness or shadow of turning. It is true, that if the moral condition of man, from the first ages, had essentially changed, the revelations of God to him must have changed also ; for their perfection is in their adaptation and fitness ; but no such change in human condition has taken place. Through all his generations he has been corrupt and guilty ; and can we need proof in the present day that he remains so ? The method, therefore, by which the guilty are pardoned must be the same in all ages. If all had been under strict law, all would have been alike subject to extreme punishment. If all are under a gracious dispensation, the terms of merciful procedure must be alike in every case.

Now, this harmony we do, in fact, discover ; and that not only in morals, but in the manner in which the Divine favour is communicated to man. For if we have sacrifice, mediation, and a priestly intercession,

in Christianity, then it harmonizes with the principles of every other revelation of God to his guilty creatures; and we trace the same infinite wisdom and grace through all its manifestations, to that "fulness of time," in which it beamed forth in the person of Jesus, in lustre only to be excelled by the revelations of glory.

And who can doubt that the sacrifices of the patriarchal age, and those of the law, were propitiatory, and expressive, too, of a propitiation, better than themselves,—

"A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they?"

The first sacrifice of which we read was offered in faith: a faith which was the substance of something hoped for; an evidence, not of this visible sacrifice, but of one not seen. Never do we see a guilty individual, or a guilty nation, approaching an offended God, to deprecate his anger, but an altar is erected, and the blood of sacrifices is poured, to testify that death was deserved, and that remission is matter of purchase. Never do we see mercies acknowledged by public acts of thanksgiving, but offerings, and whole burnt offerings, form the prominent objects of the festive scene; to proclaim that the benefits were derived through the virtue of sacrifice, and that this was the most acceptable offering to God. Priests were appointed to this service, and blood was sprinkled upon the mercy seat. Thus they confessed their sins; thus trusted in means of Divine appointment for pardon; and in this way only they sought and received the Divine blessing.

This was the character, and these were the principles, of the religions given by God in former generations; and if there be meaning in words, we have all these principles in the new covenant. For not the old covenant only was ratified with blood. Taking the cup, and presenting it to the disciples, "Drink ye all of it," said the Saviour; "for this is the blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Christ is an "offering for sin." On the shedding of his vicarious blood his intercession is founded. For we have a High Priest over the house of God, who is gone into the holiest of all, with his own blood, and thus obtains for us eternal redemption.

Here, then, we see the harmony of principles in the successive revelations of God, from the fall of Adam to the full establishment of Christianity. The frame-work of revealed religion has been precisely the same in all ages: that man is a sinner; that on the ground of his own right he cannot be justified; that law, though it admits of atonement and satisfaction, is firm and inexorable in the exaction of its penalty; that the guilty can only be pardoned through the sufferings of the innocent; that God can only be approached through mediation; and that intercession for the guilty is admissible only as it has respect to sacrifice for sin. How impressive, how solemn, are these truths, transmitted as they are to us by the testimony of all ages, and marked and signalized by the rites of the Church, wherever she has erected her temples! This is sufficient to prove that they are the expression of the counsels of the Divine mind; that they are the axioms on which he governs the guilty race; and that, like himself, they are unchangeable.

But take away the real priesthood of Christ from the system, by

converting it into figure and allusion, and the harmony is broken, and the confounding scene is presented to us, of a religion revealed to man, which, without any change in his condition, assumes principles wholly distinct, and irreconcilably opposite. In one revelation law is inexorable; in the other, it is yielding and remiss. In one the inefficacy of repentance is assumed; in the other, its efficacy is allowed. In the one, pardon is derived from atonement; in the other, from prerogative. So entire a contradiction in the principles of a moral government cannot exist. If it does, revelation is a chaos: it is darkness, and not light. It has nothing certain; it unsettles every confident deduction respecting the character of God; it leaves us puzzled and perplexed. But this cannot be. With God is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning:" nor has the sun of the heavens shone with a steadier lustre upon the earth, through all her times, and the successive generations of her sons, than has the light of those revelations with which they have been favoured, from Him whose high prerogative it is to say, "I am the Lord; I change not."

III. If we have not in the Gospel a real sacrifice, and a real priesthood, then Christianity loses its exclusive character, and can no longer claim to be the religion of mankind.

That the religion of Jesus Christ makes such a claim, cannot be doubted; and that it was understood, by its first preachers, to have this exclusive character, is matter of history, and not of reasoning. Every where the Gentiles were taught to turn from the vanities of their worship to the living God; and every true Jewish convert could say, with St. Paul, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Christianity is represented as a perfect religion, and its converts let go all beside. There must, therefore, have been some essential opposition and contrariety existing in some part of the Christian institute to every other, or this firm refusal to compromise is not to be accounted for. This can be found in nothing but the fact, that the true sacrifice had been offered, and the true priesthood established; and that the typical rites of the law and of the patriarchs had lost their meaning and their use.

The only way in which the argument drawn from the harmony of the principles of the Divine dispensations, and urged under the last head, can be avoided, is to deny that the ancient religions of Divine authority had sacrifices for sin, and that they were at first Divinely appointed. How contrary this is to the testimony of Scripture, has been already shown; and all that it is necessary here to say is, that if such sacrifices were not appointed by God,—if they were of human invention, or if they were adopted into the Jewish dispensation for the sake of accommodation, and of expressive ceremonial observance, or any other reason lower than that of actual propitiation,—then the exclusive claims of Christianity are lost. For, upon this ground, what sufficient reason can be given why heathens should renounce sacrificial ceremonies entirely? why such rites might not have been continued, provided the people would consent to offer them to the true God? or why the Jews should renounce the offerings of their law? No reason

appears why all these ceremonies might not have been continued among both Jews and Gentiles, and Christianity have been superinduced upon other systems, merely to have corrected and modified them.

But no such accommodation was allowed by the apostles. With them Christianity was not a system of regulation, but of opposition and hostility. If the first preachers could thus have accommodated Christianity, such a procedure would have saved them much trouble and persecution from the Judaizing Christians of their day, and have prevented the tumults and schisms of the primitive Churches. But the dispute respecting the law is full proof of our principle. Constantly did St. Paul, the only apostle whose writings treat of this controversial subject, teach that Christians are "dead to the law." The law was their "schoolmaster, to bring them to Christ;" but when faith came, they were no longer under that schoolmaster. The very reason why he resisted the imposition of circumcision was, that whosoever was circumcised became a debtor to do the whole law; to perform its sacrifices, and present its offerings. Such persons as do this he represents as separating themselves from Christ, and having fallen from grace. Here, then, is an irreconcilableness between the two systems plainly asserted; and one which the apostle considers as vital to Christianity. But where does this irreconcilableness lie? If Judaism, in its essential principles, were a system of morals, and nothing more, there is no irreconcilableness; both might be practised together. The Gospel might, in this case, have contained additions to the law, but it would not have been contrary to it. The very harmony of the two systems laid the foundation of harmony in their observance; but if Judaism were a system of propitiatory sacrifice, and if Christianity is a system of propitiatory sacrifice, the very harmony of the principle is the reason why both could not be practised together. The Jewish sacrifices were typical; the Christian sacrifice is real; so that, after the death of Christ, no Jewish, no patriarchal sacrifice had any typical reference. It could have no meaning, and no efficacy. To present such sacrifices, therefore, was, in effect, to deny that the true sacrifice was offered; that the end, the scope, the object of the law was come; and was, in fact, therefore, a renunciation of Christ. Here is the point of opposition; here is the principle of irreconcilableness; nor can it be found any where else. It is the priesthood of the New Testament alone which supports the exclusive rights of our religion. There is no fountain for sin and uncleanness, but what is opened there; no propitiation, but the death of Christ; no priest, but the great "High Priest of our profession;" and other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ Jesus. The practice of the rites of any other religion is a renunciation of Christ. His religion can symbolize with no other. It is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands which smites the rest, grinds them to powder, and carries them away as the dust of the threshing floor.

IV If we have no sacrifice, no priesthood, in the Gospel, then Christianity, instead of being the consummation and perfection of all other dispensations of religion to guilty man, is, in fact, inferior, imperfect, and the lowest in hope and consolation.

Under one of two kinds of moral government we must be; one of strict and unbending law, or one of law with an atoning sacrifice.

If we are placed under a government of mere law, who can stand? Who dares, on this ground, appear before his Maker? Who can lay his hand upon his heart, and appeal to God that he has never offended in thought, in word, in temper, or in deed? An impudent infidel, like Rousseau, might appeal to the Searcher of hearts that he had never sinned; but a believer in the Bible, who is acquainted with the spirituality of the Divine law, and the corruption of his own nature, must feel that he is deeply guilty, and liable to the severest punishment. In fact, the corruption of human nature is universal. "Every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is guilty before God." If, therefore, Christianity is a system of strict and unbending law, the case of every man under heaven is absolutely hopeless.

If it be said, that the Gospel law promises pardon on repentance, and future conformity; even that can give no assurance of forgiveness; for who can tell when he has repented sufficiently, and what degree of repentance is required?

If we take the principle, that future conformity to the Gospel law is required in order to the forgiveness of past sin; this does not at all relieve the case. Take the moral requirements of the Gospel; and who that understands them will say that he has fully conformed to them? Who that knows himself will stand on that ground? The Gospel law requires universal holiness, purity of heart, as well as a blameless and holy life; and if this be the condition of forgiveness, there is no hope for any child of man.

If we take another ground, and say that by the Gospel the law is lowered in its demands; we ask, Where is the proof? Does not the Gospel require us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; and our neighbour as ourselves? Behold its excessive purity in the example of our Saviour; in all his discourses, and especially in his sermon on the mount; and behold it in the whole of the apostolical epistles. "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye also holy, in all manner of conversation." Where, then, is hope for guilty man, if the sacrifice of Christ is denied?

If we say that God is not now strict to mark and to punish transgression, this is contradicted by fact. Does sin less pain the conscience than it did under former dispensations? Does it bring less misery upon individuals, families, and nations? O no! God is still a consuming fire. The same Gospel which reveals the righteousness of faith, reveals also the wrath of God from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

No; thanks be to infinite mercy, we are not so left. We have a High Priest over the house of God. If any man sin, there is a sacrifice of infinite value; the death of the incarnate Son of God. Repentance, and a believing application to the blood of atonement, are followed by a conscious pardon. The grace of the Holy Spirit is given to the humble and praying believer, to realize in his experience and conduct the holiness of the Gospel. Here is blood to atone for our many failures; and enough of security to prevent us from sinning because grace abounds. So glorious, so perfect is the Christian scheme. Hope and joy are produced and maintained without encouraging presumption. The attributes of God are so balanced and honoured as to bear upon

the spirit of man with full moral influence ; so that we serve him with a filial and loving fear, and rejoice before him with trembling. The confident and joyous anticipation of the happiness of heaven, through everlasting ages, is fully sanctioned by the sacrifice of Christ. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Such are some of the evidences of the great doctrine of the true priesthood of Christ. The blessings connected with it, and the misery consequent upon the rejection of it, eternity alone can declare.

SERMON CIV.—*The Spirit of Adoption.*

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," Rom. viii, 15, 16.

IN the preceding chapters of this epistle, St. Paul has been conducting an argument of the utmost importance, both because it refers to the great foundations of our faith, and because it shows how the established doctrines of the Gospel are designed to be carried into actual and personal experience. His argument proves that all the world were guilty before God ; that Jew and Gentile, widely differing as they did in their religious views and principles, stood, in this respect, on the same ground ; and that thus every mouth might be stopped, all boasting, all pleas of palliation removed : "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." And if guilty, then under condemnation, exposed to the penalty of the law, liable to that fearful punishment which the law threatens,—an eternal separation from God and happiness.

In the process of his great argument, his next step is to show that the Mosaic law, as a particular revelation of moral law, furnished no means of justification before God. He proves this from one great and obvious principle : "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The law is the unerring standard of righteousness ; and he who appeals to it for righteousness must come prepared with a perfect conformity to its requisitions ; if he has not that conformity, his deficiencies, his sins, are detected and exposed, and he is declared guilty, he is condemned as a sinner : the very office of the law, as to the guilty, is to give them the knowledge of their own sin, to convict them of it, and to show them their exposure to the penalty. How, then, can justification, as it implies pardon, come from the law, whose sole office, as to the guilty, is to give them the heart-rending knowledge of sin, and, even to all eternity, to strengthen and increase the conviction ?

The conclusion is put in a still clearer light, by introducing the case of those who are very serious in their disposition, who are concerned about their religious state, and who are making the strongest efforts to please God. The apostle, in referring to them, speaks in the first person, as if there had been a time when himself was of the number ; it

certainly is not clear that he had been so, but he speaks in the first person, evidently intending to describe a particular class. To this, a large portion of the chapter before that from which the text is taken is devoted: he shows that, even in this state of mind,—when men are under the influence of the Spirit which convinceth men of sin, when that Spirit hath opened their eyes to discern the spirituality of the law, inspired them with the strongest distaste for sin, and earnest desires to be delivered from it,—he shows that even in this state the law can do nothing for them; that it gives “the knowledge of sin,” but no power over it; and that though the man consents to the law that it is good, and strives to fulfil it, still he feels himself in bondage; he finds a principle of corruption in his flesh, which obtains the victory over every resolution; and so, at last, after repeated struggles, he comes to the issue, and cries out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” Thus acknowledging that his deliverance cannot be effected by himself, but must come from without. Here, then, the Gospel comes in: “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—By him, and by him alone, can deliverance come. And then he tells us that “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” to them who have fled to him for refuge, who rest on him as the atoning sacrifice for their sins, who so believe as to obtain a full and personal interest in his merits and intercession; there is no condemnation to them, they are freely justified by his grace; and now the power of sin is broken, and they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” having made them “free from the law of sin and death.”

The apostle then goes on to speak of the great and glorious privileges of all true believers, and, among the rest, he introduces the one that is mentioned in the text; teaching us, that they are not only reconciled to God, not only justified freely by his grace, and brought into this state of favour and friendship with him, but that they have the certain persuasion that they have thus passed from death unto life, and that this is no matter of doubtful inference of their own, from premises which they may have laid down wrongly, or an inference so argued out as that they may be mistaken in it, but that God himself is pleased to show it them; that to do this is the office of the Holy Spirit, called, in the text, “the Spirit of adoption;” that it is he himself who assures them of this blessed change in their condition as to God. This is the subject now before us; I need not say that it is one deeply interesting to us all: to know, not only that our sins may be remitted, and that we may become members of the family of God, but, likewise, that we may be graciously assured of it by the Holy Spirit of God; that this assurance may be a living and abiding one, shedding abroad its comforting and hallowing influences in our hearts continually; and that it shall be to us a foretaste and pledge of the assurance we shall have of God’s eternal favour, when we see him in his glory, and when he speaks to us even from his throne. This subject then is of importance to us; let us seriously attend to it, endeavouring to mark its nature; and, especially, let us earnestly press into the enjoyment of it, if we have not received it; and let us rejoice in the additional confirmation of the faith we possess, if, by the blessing of God, we are enabled to call him “Father.”

I. Let us, in the first place, offer a few expository remarks on the terms of the text.

This will be necessary to prevent error and misconception.

The first term which needs explanation is "the spirit of bondage." What does the apostle mean by this expression? There are, indeed, some who tell us, that he here personifies, so to speak, the genius of the law, and calls it "the spirit of bondage;" and so calls it because, as they tell us, there was that in the law which naturally produces a servile spirit, a servile dread of God, uneasiness with respect to the future, and a want of confidence in him, even in all its services. Brethren, I doubt the fact. When the apostle tells us that he was alive without the law, or quite alive, in his own apprehension, before the law came home to his conscience with its convincing energy, as revealed by the Holy Ghost in its proper spiritual meaning, he was not then the subject of this servility and bondage; nor were any of the careless and unawakened Pharisees in such a state of bondage and fear. We have an illustration of this in the case of the Pharisee and publican who went up to the temple to pray: the publican, indeed, had "the spirit of bondage unto fear;" but the Pharisee, pressing boldly forward, justified himself before God. The meaning of the expression, therefore, cannot be, that it is merely the personification of the genius of the law, because, then, all who were under the law would thus have been affected by the bondage; and, since the Pharisees were most anxious to obtain justification by the law, they, of course, would have been most under the influence of this spirit, which we see clearly they were not.

By the "spirit of bondage" the apostle means the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit in his convincing operations, for it is one of his offices to convince the world of sin. When he brings a man into such a state that he consents to the law that it is good; that he desires to do good, and yet has his eyes open to discern all his defects and weaknesses; that he groans under a weight and burden from which he cannot relieve himself, and feels himself fast tied and bound by a chain which he cannot break; when he is thus brought into the state described by the apostle, and says, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" then has he received the "spirit of bondage unto fear."

The next term to be explained is, "the spirit of adoption." Some have supposed that this means the genius of the Gospel personified, because there is something so free, and liberal, and hopeful, in the whole character of Christianity, that the Spirit of adoption is that disposition which the Gospel, considered under this character, produces in the mind, allaying their fears, and exciting their hopes. But we can easily prove, brethren, that the apostle cannot mean by this expression merely the genius of the Gospel; we can easily prove that he refers to the Holy Spirit himself; because, in the next clause, you will see, he says, "the Spirit itself," or himself, or that same Spirit, "beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." This is rendered more clear by the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Galatians, where we read, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth," not the genius of the Gospel, but "the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 6. If the Spirit of his Son is the Holy Spirit, then is the Spirit of adoption here mentioned

the Holy Spirit of God, whose particular office it is, after he has brought us under a sense of bondage, and made us painfully aware of the need of deliverance at the hands of Christ, and led us to seek it from him alone,—his office it is to give us, in some way or other, (we shall afterward inquire in what way he gives us,) a blessed testimony and assurance of our adoption into the family of God, an assurance that we are the children of God. For this reason, and in reference to this particular office, he is called “the Spirit of adoption.”

The third term is “Abba,” which is interpreted “Father.” There may be some truth in what many commentators say, that the reason why the term was used in the Syriac language, and then expressed in the Greek, was to intimate that Jew and Gentile were equally privileged by the Gospel to call God “Father;” that there was, in this respect, no difference between them, but that whoever believed, whether Jew or Gentile, entered into the enjoyment of this common privilege, and that the believing Gentile was as much a child of God as the believing Jew. However, there is more probably an allusion to the prohibition which was well known among the Jews and others, and by which no slave was allowed to call the master of the family “father;” that was the language of a child, not of a slave; and the apostle, therefore, represents this as the great privilege of Christians, that they are no longer servants, no longer slaves, for in that condition they could not call God “Father:” as the bond-slave of sin, this is not language for you, but the moment you believe in Christ, and become a child of God by faith in him, then may you call him “Father” with unfaltering tongue; since you have entered into the condition of children, you may use the language of filial confidence and affection.

It is worthy of notice, that the apostle adds, “Whereby we cry, Abba, Father;” intimating to us, that it is impossible to call God “Father,” with this filial confidence and affection, but by the Spirit of adoption. Whatever measure of the influences of the Spirit, under any other character, we may receive, it is only by the Spirit as the Spirit of adoption, that we can call God “Father;” and it is necessary that we should receive this Spirit in order to the existence and authorized use of this filial and delightful confidence: “the Spirit of adoption, whereby” alone “we cry, Abba, Father.”

Having made these remarks on the terms contained in the text, we may consider,

II. The respective offices of the two witnesses here mentioned.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,” and not merely to our spirit,—which it must do,—but along with our spirit; that seems to me to be the proper interpretation of this part of the text. Thus have we two witnesses, the Holy Spirit of God, and our own spirit. It is important for us to mark the distinction, and to perceive clearly what is the proper object of each.

Let us notice, then, in the first place, the subject of their testimony. It is, “that we are the children of God.” This testimony of the Spirit of God is not that we have been awakened to a sense of our fallen condition; that we have truly and heartily repented us of our sins; that a very considerable number of moral changes have taken place in our desires and affections; that, in many respects, we love that which we once hated, and hate that which we once loved;—all these things do, in

effect, more or less, take place, as preparatory to a man's justification before God ;—but the office of the Spirit of adoption is not, let it be observed, to assure us of these various moral changes, and then to lead us to conclude that, because they have taken place, we are the children of God : the direct and simple object of this testimony of the Spirit is to assure us “that we are the children of God ;” the Holy Spirit gives some witness to the great fact, that our sins are forgiven, and that we, being reconciled to God, are now adopted into his family.

Let us observe, in the next place, that the Spirit is the only witness who can give direct evidence of this. He is not only a competent witness, but the only competent witness. To this fact of our reconciliation to God, considered as a fact, our own spirits neither do nor can bear testimony. So far as direct testimony is concerned, our own spirits have nothing to do with it. They are not competent to depose on it. He alone can do this to whom it is perfectly known, and that is the Spirit of God. For the illustration of this, remember that the act of pardon takes place upon our believing in Christ. Whenever we believe with the faith which God requires from us, then are we forgiven ; we are justified, and restored to the favour of God. But this act of mercy is one which takes place in the mind of God. Who can be cognizant of that act ? Till it pleases God himself to reveal it, it must remain unknown. If he sent a special messenger, human or angelic, to inform me of it, he himself must first have communicated the fact. “What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him ? Even so the things of God knoweth no man.” The spirit of one man knows not the spirit of another man. That which passes in our own minds is only known to ourselves. How, then, does man become acquainted with that act of the Divine mind by which the true believer is freely justified for the sake of our Lord Jesus ? The apostle tells us elsewhere : “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God :” “for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.” He, therefore, alone can be cognizant of the fact of forgiveness and adoption, to whom that fact is made known by the testimony of the Spirit. For the promises of God are all general ; our names are not written in the sacred pages. And whether or not I have so believed as to come up to the requisitions of the Gospel in this respect, is not for me to know. God is the proper and only Judge. And as, when God accepts my faith, he forgives my sins, so he does this by an act of his own mind, of which he makes no general and open revelation. The method by which he has appointed to convey the knowledge of this fact to the heart of the individual, for his own personal comfort and benefit, is this testimony of the Holy Spirit ; and when this act of pardoning mercy takes place, then, in pursuance of his own benevolent will, and the office which has been assigned him in the great economy of redemption, does he hasten to remove the burden of guilt from our conscience, and to become to us “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

How this testimony is borne, or what is the particular manner in which it is communicated, may be difficult to describe ; neither is it necessary that we should be able to describe it. There are various ways, no doubt, by which the knowledge of this fact is communicated to the soul. But however it be, whether it be called an impression,

or any other name, it is that which amounts to a witness and a testimony; that by which the doubt is put away, and the fact ascertained. For why else is a witness called in, but to clear up some doubt? For what purpose do we bring forward witnesses, but to come to the knowledge of some truth? Now, whatever be the method by which the Holy Spirit communicates the fact to the mind, the fact is communicated, and known, because communicated. In different individuals different ways may be employed, answering to the different modes of speech which we find in Scripture on the subject. There is the lifting up the light of the Divine countenance upon the soul; the shedding the love of God abroad in the heart; the crying, "Abba, Father;" the giving testimony to our spirits that we are the children of God; but all come from the Spirit, and produce some persuasion and assurance that I am now a child of God, through his mercy in Christ; that Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven all my sins.

Then, next, we have the witness of our own spirits. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with," along with, "our spirit." The Spirit of God alone, we have seen, can bear direct witness to the fact of our forgiveness and adoption. Why, then, is the testimony of our own spirit introduced, and conjoined with the testimony of the Divine Spirit? Certain it is that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" and light. He speaks with a voice by which the faithful soul cannot be deceived. But though there can be no delusion where the Spirit of God dwells and shines, yet there may be impressions not from him, and which we may mistake for the sacred testimony which he bears. Against a delusion of this sort you must be most carefully guarded. Nor are the means by which such a delusion may be detected and exposed, of difficult application. Where the Spirit of God dwells as the Spirit of adoption, he dwells as the great Author of regeneration; as the source of all holy principles and feelings. Our justification and our sanctification are thus inseparable. The Spirit of God dwells with all his graces where he dwells at all.

"He sheds abroad a Saviour's love,
And thus enkindles ours."

He enables us to love God, by showing that God loves us; and thus, when he comes to the heart of the believer as a witnessing and comforting Spirit, he comes as the Spirit of all holiness. When the impression of which we may speak produces not true love to God, and all those fruits which spring from the love of God, and prove its existence, then ought we to feel that it is not from the Spirit of God. Of the change which that good Spirit always effects, our own spirits must always be conscious. If we love God; if we love our neighbour; if, in a word, we are spiritually minded, as having the fruits of the Spirit, which are always where the Spirit himself is, then have we the witness of our own spirits to the fact that we have received the Spirit of God; that those impressions from which we say we have derived so much comfort, are not delusive ones, but are indeed from the Spirit of God. To this fact, that we have the fruits of the Spirit, our own spirit bears a direct testimony, and thus bears, indirectly, a testimony to the fact of our adoption.

“We by his Spirit prove,
And know the things of God;
The things which, freely of his love,
He hath on us bestow’d.

“Our nature’s turn’d, our mind
Transform’d in all its powers;
And both the witnesses are join’d,
The Spirit of God with ours.”

III. I proceed to consider, in the third place, a few errors connected with this doctrine, into which men have sometimes fallen.

I trust it is evident and clear to you, that, upon our believing in Christ with a penitent heart, we are justified before God; that the knowledge of that great act of pardoning mercy, of which only the Holy Ghost can take immediate cognizance, is communicated to us by his testimony; and that from this testimony springs up filial confidence, and the power to use filial language, and to call God our Father. But in reference to this important doctrine there are some errors which ought to be noticed.

The first is, that there can be no certainty of our being now in a state of salvation; that, in fact, this is an unattainable blessing. It is indeed acknowledged to be a great and unspeakable blessing. Nor can any one do less than acknowledge this. A delightful privilege it must be for sinful man to be enabled to look up to God with confidence, and to use such language as this: “O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away; and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.” That a man, unworthy as he is of the least of God’s mercies, should have the access of a child to the throne of the heavenly grace; should go there with confidence, and ask and receive whatever blessings he may need, whether in time or eternity; that his cry shall never pass unheeded; that he should be encouraged to ask by the previous confidence which his knowledge of the pardoning mercy of God inspires, that God, his reconciled Father, will withhold no good thing from him;—all this is acknowledged to be a great and unspeakable blessing; but then, it is said, it is not attainable. Well, then, brethren, if it be not attainable, the state of good men under the New Testament dispensation is far inferior to the state of good men under the Old. And if that be a supposition not to be admitted, neither can we admit the notion from which it springs. It is no new thing in the world. The first man of whom we have any record that he offered a sacrifice in faith, obtained the testimony, the witness of his acceptance. “Enoch walked with God, and was not; for God took him;” and “before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Now, what was there peculiar in the case of Enoch? He was a sinful man like ourselves; and deserved as little at the hands of God. There is nothing either in the experience of Enoch, or of any other of the great men mentioned in the Old Testament, but what may become (allowing for the particular circumstances of their case) substantially and generally the experience of every man that has true faith in God. Look at the character of Abraham, and see the filial confidence that he had in God from the time that his faith was counted to him for righteousness. He was styled “the friend of God;” and

his whole conduct shows that he knew that God was indeed his friend. When David so affectingly prays in his penitential psalm, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation," did he not recollect that joy in the salvation of God which he had previously experienced? Not, surely, a salvation which related to any outward deliverance; for the very nature of the psalm, and the circumstances under which it was composed, oblige us to conclude that the expression, "the joy of thy salvation," refers to that state of friendship with God to which he had been previously introduced, and to that assurance of his being thus in the Divine favour, which spread so much joy through his spirit. These were the joys that had been withered by his sin; and for their restoration and revival he prayed. And many other passages show that this was the case with good men under the old dispensation. And if ours be a dispensation much more glorious; and if we know, too, from express declarations, that the Spirit of God has this particular office, and for this reason bears the character of the Comforter, and the Spirit of adoption, we are not to conclude that we are placed in circumstances inferior, but rather superior, to those of the saints of the Old Testament dispensation, with respect to the comfortable assurance of acceptance with God. If they had gladness put into their hearts by the lifting upon them of the light of the Divine countenance, surely the same cause of peace and gladness shall be vouchsafed now that Jesus is glorified, and the Holy Ghost given.

We may say, also, that this notion, that no such direct assurance is attainable, is contrary to all the words of Christ and his apostles. We do not mean to say, that it may not have different degrees. It may be accompanied by admixtures of doubt; it may be far, in the first instance, from being a strong assurance; but, in all its stages, it is that which gives comfort, and rest, and peace to the soul. In all its degrees it enables man to call God Father. When our Lord says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," can such words be reconciled with the idea of our being in a state of uncertainty whether we are pardoned or accepted? Remember what that uncertainty implies; remember that it implies this: "I am uncertain whether God be my friend or my enemy. I am uncertain whether his wrath still abides on me, unmitigated by my merciful pardon, or whether he secretly regards me with compassion and kindness, though he has not manifested this to me. It is matter of uncertainty whether I shall live through this day, or not; therefore, it is matter of uncertainty whether I die under the curse of God, or cheered by his smile,—whether I am to be happy or miserable for ever." Uncertainty as to our acceptance with God implies all this; and the more seriously we are concerned in securing the salvation of our souls, the more painful will such a state of uncertainty be. Now, if this be the only state into which religion brings us, a state of uncertainty, mitigated, perhaps, by some degree of hope, but yet far from being removed, with what truth can Christ be said to have given rest to the soul? The very idea of a spirit at rest, a spirit in a state of quiet repose, is perfectly inconsistent with the idea of a state of anxious suspense, in which we are now cheered by hope, and now depressed by fear. If it be impossible for us to attain such an assurance as shall give us peace, and deliver our spirits from anxiety and fear,

then is there no real rest of the soul to be attained in this life. But no ; here is the promise of Christ himself : " I will give you rest ; " and that rest is vouchsafed by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who reveals to us the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, removes from our conscience the burden of guilt, and witnesses to us that we are no longer strangers and aliens, but children and heirs.

But then we are told, that there is a great danger of the spread of enthusiasm and fanaticism, if it be taught, that this knowledge of salvation is communicated by the direct and immediate impression of the Spirit of God ; and that, therefore, it will be much more safe to proceed in the way of argument and inference. The process by which our fears are to be allayed, and our doubts removed ; by which, in a word, we are to obtain rest to our souls, is this : " Since God," we are told, " has said in his word, that those persons are his children in whom certain characteristics are found, we must examine ourselves, to see whether these marks are found in us ; and, if we find them, we may conclude that our sins are forgiven, and that we are the children of God ; and thus, in this safe and rational way, we may infer our adoption into the Divine family." Well ; let it be allowed that all this is plausible ; but still, what are we to do with the text, and other passages of the same import ? Men may adopt plausible theories ; but are we bound to receive the Scriptures, and fairly to interpret them ? And upon this theory what are we to do with the text ? The apostle speaks of the Spirit of God as the Spirit of adoption ; and he tells us, that we have not received the spirit of bondage unto fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, " Abba, Father ; " and that this same Spirit, the Spirit itself, bears testimony to our spirits, and with our spirits, that we are the children of God. This, according to him, is the process by which we come to the knowledge of the fact of our pardon and adoption ; and if we are to form our religious opinions by the testimony of Scripture, and not by the philosophy and imagination of man, what other process can we admit ? Take that passage in the epistle to the Galatians : " And because ye are sons," because ye are freely justified by the grace of God, and admitted into his family, " God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Why, according to this theory, you cry, " Abba, Father," in virtue of your own discovery : it is your own reasoning and inference whose voice you hear, not that of the blessed Spirit of God.

Let us examine the object before us a little more closely. There are certain fruits of the Spirit, it is said, by the existence of which in ourselves we are to infer that we are the children of God. What are these fruits ? If you examine them, you will find that several are such as must necessarily imply a previous persuasion of our being in the favour of God, communicated by God himself. In a passage in the epistle to the Galatians, we possess a most important enumeration of what the apostle emphatically calls " the fruit of the Spirit," that is, the result of his presence in the soul, and of his influence and operation upon it. He says, " But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." According to the theory we are now considering, a man is to examine himself whether he have this love, joy, peace ; whether, in fact, all

these graces exist in his soul; and if, on examination, he discovers them, he is to infer that he possesses the Christian character; and if so, that it has been wrought in him by the Holy Spirit; and, as a farther inference, inasmuch as that Spirit is only given to the reconciled, that therefore he, the person examining, is so pardoned and reconciled. But is it not obvious to you, that love to God directly implies the knowledge of his love to us, as our reconciled Father? God's love to us is the cause of our love to him, and must therefore be known by us before we can love him. So, too, as to peace. Can we have this before we know whether we are at peace with God, before we know that his anger is turned away from us? What is the cause of the distress of that penitent mourner in sin? He tells you, and he tells you truly, that it is because God is angry with him. Now, how do you propose to calm his agitation? You tell him that he is to examine himself, whether he has peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and that, if he has, he may then infer that God's anger is turned away from him; that is, he feels he has not either peace or joy, and you tell him that, in order that he may obtain them, he is to construct an argument whose basis is, that both peace and joy are already in his possession. Brethren, love, and peace, and joy are all fruits of the Spirit, "given unto us," on our "being justified by faith," as the Spirit of adoption. The graces which the apostle enumerates constitute "the fruit of the Spirit;" but his very first work, on our believing, and that by which this fruit is produced, is, to bear witness to our adoption into God's family, and thus to enable us to call God our Father. The fruits of the Spirit flow from the witness of the Spirit. As soon as a man is pardoned, he receives the Spirit of adoption, and he immediately cries, "Abba, Father;" and now he loves him, feels that he is at peace with him, and that he can "joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom he has now received the reconciliation."

We notice another error, that this comfortable assurance and persuasion of our adoption is the privilege only of some eminent Christians. That, I believe, is a prevailing notion with many; but there is no authority for it in the word of God. This blessing is as common a blessing as pardon; it is put on the same ground, and is offered in the same general manner. And I would say, that the whole of this objection is grounded upon some secret idea of moral worth; some idea that very holy persons may attain to it by a sort of merit of their own, but that others cannot. Brethren, none of these gifts are bestowed under any other character than as the purchase of the blood of Christ; and they are all parts of the great salvation, held out to you, however unworthy, without money and without price.

I would say of the errors to which I have already adverted, that I really wonder that so many persons, and, generally speaking, very serious and excellent persons, should yet be afraid of this blessed doctrine, and thus persist in associating it with fanaticism. Is it not the universal doctrine of the book of God, that he will in very deed dwell with men, making the human heart his temple, and revealing there his glory, and manifesting his love? Is it not the glory of the new dispensation, that pardoned man is specially taken into communion with God? Is not access to the mercy seat of manifested favour the great privilege of the Gospel? Is it only to the interposing, darkening veil that we

are permitted to come? And we are to lose all these grandeurs, all these holy joys, from a low and wretched fear, by which we place ourselves in subserviency to the infidel philosophy of the world, and seek to conciliate the objections of those who never go beyond the porch of the temple, and argue against the existence of any thing in religion with which themselves are not acquainted! Let us think better and nobler things. Let us enter more fully into the character of the Christian dispensation. God dwells with man, and man is called to dwell in God, and to walk with him in vital, sensible fellowship and union. This manifested presence of God sanctifies the man whom it comforts; nor is it possible for a man who rightly understands the doctrine, to convert it into an occasion of folly and sin. There is a sanctity about it, pure and delicate as the glory which it reveals. Guard the doctrine against all misconception. Teach it with all its inseparable connections. Show that the fruits of the Spirit so follow from the witness of the Spirit, that he in whom they are not found, whatever his pretensions may be, does not possess the testimony of Divine adoption. Use this rule to detect the self-deceiver, and, if you can, to convince him of his awful delusion, and to bring him to humility, and penitent confession, and prayer. Do all this; but give not up the doctrine itself.

I may briefly advert to another error, another misconception of this doctrine. Some persons confound this assurance of present acceptance with an assurance of final salvation. The one is very distinct from the other. I find no authority for the last in the book of God. We are called to live in the comfortable assurance of the Divine favour and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; but this conveys to us no certain assurance of final salvation. We are still to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same things. The faith which brings us into this state must maintain us in it. We must still watch and pray; still lay aside every weight, and easily besetting sin; still fight the good fight of faith, ever feeling that only to those who are faithful unto death shall the crown of life be given.

Let us conclude the whole by a few practical observations.

In the first place, this doctrine may well lead those of you to consider your own condition, who feel, who must feel, in your own hearts, that you are under the Divine displeasure, that you are living carelessly, and neglecting the great salvation. Am I addressing any such persons now? You know well, (for you cannot have heard the truth so often without knowing,) that your religious state is not right; that you are not upon the rock; that you have not the good hope through grace; and that, were you now called into the presence of God, your Judge, you would receive the summons with anguish and dread. And yet, alas! with this inward conviction, that your heart is not right with God, that you are not prepared for death and judgment, how you immerse yourselves in the business and pleasures of life! how habitually do you restrain prayer before God! how carelessly do you hear his word! how presumptuously do you depend on the exercise of his mercy at some future time! I beseech you, brethren, by the mercy which has spared you to this day, that you no longer live in this state. Turn to God; confess your sin before him; let the weight of your case rest on your conscience, and make you flee for refuge to lay hold on the

hope set before you. Whenever you think, you are uneasy, you feel that there is a weight on your spirit. Carry the burden no longer. Hasten to Him, of whose infinite willingness to pardon all that return to him you have so often heard; and increase not your guilt, and your future punishment, by continuing to resist these gracious impressions, by still turning a deaf ear to all these solemn warnings.

The subject applies itself to those whose conscience is burdened by the sense of guilt and sin. Many of you desire to be able to cry, "Abba, Father." You have heard of this blessing; you have perhaps been waiting for it: and what is the reason that you have not received it? How is it that you are not now rejoicing in the mercy of God, through the testimony of the Spirit of adoption? Have you earnestly desired this great grace? Has it been a special object of your prayers? Have you learned the art of waiting upon God, and of keeping your spirits in a waiting frame? Have you been expecting his mercy? Have you been fully persuaded that this is your Christian privilege and calling? Do you feel that this is a blessing to be obtained by faith in Christ? that you must plead the merit of his atonement? And do you know that mere hoping will not do? that those who really desire and hope will also plead and pray? When once you get the faith that waits, and pleads, and prays, it will not be long before God will hear your earnest prayer, and say unto you, "I am thy salvation." Look up to him now. The blessing is purchased for you. You are sinful, and can never merit it; you need the heavenly gift; you deeply feel your need; you earnestly desire its supply; you therefore can never be better prepared for it. All things are ready; come to the marriage. There is the blessing of pardon, free justification before God, and the Spirit of adoption, to enable you to cry, "Abba, Father." Rest not short of the grace offered you in the Gospel. It cannot be that these impressions shall continue in all their strength, if they are not allowed to urge you to the great result. God has begun a good work in you; he has awakened you to a sense of the value of the blessings which he promises. You must "follow on to know the Lord," and be determined to wait for him as they that watch for the morning; otherwise your impressions will become weaker, and by and by you will feel that you have grieved the Spirit of God, and that he has departed from you. God is pleased that you should take hold of his strength. Jacob, when he discovered that he was wrestling with the Angel of the covenant, when he found that he had hold of a Being who could bless him, grasped him the more powerfully, and would not let him go. God is well pleased with your earnestness. Take hold, in earnest prayer, of the same condescending Angel of the new covenant; say, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Yes; and he will bless you, and you shall be blessed.

Let those who have received the Spirit of adoption recollect both their privileges and their duties. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Such is your blessed condition. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, and of the blessings you profess to enjoy. In your whole temper and deportment, show the real character and tendency of the blessing you profess to have received. If the Spirit of Christ has shown you your own personal interest in the blood of Christ, then has he made you Christ-like,—

humble, and meek, and gentle. The very feeling that your sin is pardoned increases your hatred of sin. You feel that you have much forgiven; and that very feeling produces and preserves the temper by which you are always disposed and prepared to be kind, and courteous, and forgiving. True happiness in God, and sweetness of temper, are always conjoined. God's Spirit bears no witness of pardoning mercy where pride, and wrath, and bitterness, and self-willed obstinacy are indulged. You are called to adorn the Gospel of God your Saviour in all things; adorn this doctrine also. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." But "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Thus, if you walk with God, you shall have the testimony that you please God; you shall walk in the light of his countenance. And this joy of the Lord shall give you strength for labour, and patience for suffering and trial. Nor shall it be dimmed in death. When you are about to "sleep in Jesus," your last hymn shall be, ere you escape from earth to sing the new song, the song of the redeemed, in heaven: "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

SERMON CV.—*The Divine Glory Revealed in Christ.*

Preached on Christmas-Day.

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together," Isa. xl, 3-5.

MANY have admired this prophecy as an ancient poem, who have not arrived at the proper interpretation. The poet seizes on one point in the national theology, the coming of a great deliverer. In his imagination he gives him the character of a conqueror, coming to save and to deliver. He represents him as marching along in eastern pomp, issuing messengers before him to prepare the way; sending out pioneers to raise the valleys, to level the mountains, to make "the crooked places straight, and the rough places plain." And some have seen no more than this in it; they have lost all the character of the prophecy, in their admiration of the poem. We are to remember that the prophetic dispensation was a Divine dispensation, and that the prophets were holy men of God. There is the richest poetry, yet there is no mere adornment; that is, there is nothing designed only to please the imagination; but with every circumstance of figure and ornament, some new revelation is communicated, or some old revelation placed in a new aspect, and shown with fresh vigour. Hence, therefore, in the interpretation of this text we are really to expect a person crying, a voice preparing the way; we are really to expect the removing of difficulties, similar to the levelling of mountains, the raising of valleys, &c; and we are

really to expect, not merely some great deliverer, indefinitely, but such a deliverer, such a Saviour, as shall answer the description given of him in the text, "The glory of the Lord."

Another introductory remark may be necessary. We cannot understand the Scriptures aright, unless we know that God has established an instructive set of types, making one thing the figure of another. All nature is full of types of the most blessed things; and happy is the man who can read the book of nature in the light of the Lord. Every thing around him shall give him instruction. But one event is often made the type of another. The deliverance of the children of Israel was a type of the deliverance of the people of God. Their journey through the wilderness, their supplies, their deliverances, their entrance into Canaan, are a type of the true Joshua bringing his "many sons to glory." The Babylonish captivity is a type of the present state of the Jews; and their restoration, probably alluded to in the text, is the best type of their being brought again into the Church; and the whole together is a type of the deliverance which God works out for his people, and for the whole Church. The language, too, which is suited to these outward events, is often employed by the Spirit to denote other events. For instance: the language which refers to the deliverance of his people out of the Babylonish captivity, and their restoration to their own land, is employed to set forth his plan of working in the hearts of men, and in the world at large.

These things must be remembered in reference to prophecy. What appears to be human skill is absolutely heavenly wisdom. It must not be interpreted by the common canons of criticism, or we shall lose all its force, and beauty, and meaning.

I take the text to be prophecy, in the first and lowest sense, of the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon; then of the appearance of Christ in the flesh; of the manifestation, also, of Christ in the believer's soul; and of the manner in which he will set up his spiritual kingdom in the world, and the glorious administration by which his dominion is to be established. Time will not allow us to go into all these particulars; but I will call your attention to the literal, the spiritual, and the allegorical accomplishment of this prophecy. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Attend,

I. To its literal accomplishment.

This prophecy was literally accomplished,

1. In the appearance of John the Baptist.

It is the prophecy of a herald. Ages rolled away, and no such preparing voice was heard in the desert of Judca. But it was at length heard. It was heard when the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth cried out, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And perhaps it will immediately strike you, that there is between the terms of this prophecy, and the delivery of such a message, nothing to warrant the idea of its fulfilment. A solitary man in a wilderness, preaching repentance, does not seem to answer to the grandeur of the prophet's style. "What a falling off," you will say, "from the terms of the text, in the appearance of John the Baptist! 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,' and so on, suggests something more of pomp and circumstance than this." It does; and the

Jews thought so ; and every man who judges after the flesh will think so. And it was by this outward pomp of language that the spirituality and faith of men were to be put to the test. The Jews saw nothing in the coming of John to answer the terms of this prophecy, a man coming with heralds and banners. And it was so written, that "hearing they might hear, and not understand;" and that to men who would not become spiritual, the very Scriptures might become a stumbling-block over which they might fall, whereunto, also, they were appointed. The Scriptures will not be a savour of life unto life, but of death unto death, unless we divest ourselves of worldly wisdom, and of worldly habits of judging. For yet, in point of fact, in the coming of John the Baptist, there was not only that which equalled the text, but that which was superior. Hence, our Lord declared that John was greater than all the prophets. What, was there no glory in a dispensation by which, after the Church had been for ages trembling and looking out, a man should come and say, "The Lord is coming, prepare the way before him?" that a man should come out to cheer the Church, not by the distant prospect of his appearing, but by the assurance of his actual approach ; and who, after he had prepared the way by repentance, thus making the crooked places straight, and the rough places plain, could say, what no prophet was ever able to do, could say of him as he walked along, "Behold the Lamb of God!" To the mere eye of reason this was no accomplishment ; but to the eye of faith it was something even above the prophecy.

2. Following the footsteps of the servant, comes the Master.

And as John had said, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," then was the glory of God manifested ; and all flesh, living at that time in Judea, saw it together : the glory of God in human nature ; the glory of God made manifest to his people. The same remarks may be made as to the advent of Christ, which were made as to the coming of his herald. There was nothing in the appearance of Christ which seemed to correspond to the expectations of the people, and to this description of the pomp of an eastern monarch on his victorious march. And yet it was fulfilled.

See the Jew taking this prophecy, and looking for the Saviour.—He sees no correspondence, and he rejects him. There was in him no form or comeliness that he should be desired. "Where," he cries, "is the pomp, the majesty, the preparation ? Where is the redeeming Word ? Where is the Deliverer ?" It was all there ; and yet they could not see it. For the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and to his creatures, was a manifestation of the glory of God. Every thing in Christ, even in his humiliation, was connected with divinity. Even when he was flesh, and tabernacled among us, "we beheld his glory," said John. Jesus Christ was the visible image of the glory of God all the time he was on earth. He was the visible image,

Of the power of God. His works were Divine ; his word was power. See his power over the elements : the storm is hushed at his bidding ; bread multiplies in his hands, so as to feed five thousand ; his touch removes diseases, and proves to be the touch of that hand which can wound and heal, which can kill and make alive ; the very dead hear his voice and live, and own him to be the true fountain of life. He was the image of the glory,

Of the truth of God. The doctrine of Christ has brought us nearer to the unclouded truth of the Divine mind than men were ever brought before. Streams of Divine light were always poured out from that fountain, but they were scattered and mixed; there was a dimness with the light, like the light of the morning playing on clouds of various forms, which, though beautiful to the eye, proved that the light itself was obstructed; they were the pledges of something more glorious: so in the person of Christ, all the ancient types were removed, and men were taught no longer "in divers manners," but God spake to them face to face by his Son. The counsels, the judgment of God, all that respects man, all the duties and virtues required of him, the simple method and plan of his salvation, on all these subjects he spake with clearness, without the intervention of type or shadow. He was the image of the glory,

Of the holiness of God; and that even while he was man upon earth. You will all say that if the character of a mere man were to be drawn, absolutely perfect, without notice of shade or infirmity, it would be out of place. Such a character as is given us of Christ could not be given of the best man. You see, however, at the same time, that, as God manifest in the flesh, as not tainted by the flesh, as born of the Holy Ghost, that such a character of him is proper, and that any other would be unsuitable. Such a character we have of Christ, and without any note even of infirmity; and as this was of great importance, it has pleased God that the testimony of it should come from his enemies. On what was he condemned? On the charge of blasphemy: but what was this? It was professing to be what he really was, "the true God and eternal life." Pilate's wife has a dream, and she says, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." Pilate himself washes his hands before the multitude, and says, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." Judas, who had been in his privacy, and had seen all his conduct, brings back the price of his blood, awful to relate, as the price of innocence. Those who had been with him in his temptations, who had been with him in all the circumstances of his life, both public and private, testified the spotless purity of his character, and rejoiced to seal the truth of their testimony with their blood. And even in those virtues which are called human, there was a difference: his meekness was different from the meekness of men; his zeal, his humility, his compassion, his constant aim to do good, all these human virtues maintain in him a special and peculiar character, some how or other mingling the Divine with human. This makes the standard so high after which we are to follow, and to which we are to be approaching nearer and nearer for ever. He was the visible image of the glory,

Of the justice of God. Though this is not so frequently adverted to as other attributes, yet it is important. Why did Christ die so willingly? I grant that it was from love to men; but it was also from love to justice, because he "loved righteousness and hated iniquity." or, as it is expressed in a still more appropriate passage, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart." And what "will" was that? That will of God by which we are sanctified, or set apart, namely, as his offering. It was the will of God that he should suffer, that he should die to make an atonement for sin; it was

that "law" which he had within his heart, a respect to that law, a will that it should not be lowered, that its authority should not be weakened, that its lustre should be evident, even in the pardoning of iniquity, transgression, and sin. Thus, when he surrendered himself to death, he was the image of the love and the justice of God, maintaining his honour and purity unspotted.

Thus Christ was the visible image of the glory of God. He was ever employed in teaching and saving mankind, and his love was stronger than death; and its character is still the same, it glows with unabating ardour. As the great High Priest, he feels the tenderest affection for all who put their trust in him.

If, then, the glory of God was revealed even in the lowliness and sufferings of the Saviour, I ask if the coming of Christ had not in it more real pomp than if he had come with all the grandeur of an eastern monarch, to a people who waited for him? Let us attend,

II. To its spiritual accomplishment.

This is seen in the work of God in the human soul, in the manifestation of Christ to the hearts of men. In this there is both preparation and manifestation; for Christ, in mercy, no more bursts upon the soul at once, than he did upon the world; he sends his messenger to prepare the way before him; this is the first part of the process: that preparing herald, figured by John the Baptist, is repentance. A doctrine, this, not peculiar to John; for Christ also preached it, and the apostles went every where preaching that men should repent; and this is a standing rule of the Gospel. In vain will you celebrate the advent of Christ, unless you celebrate his advent to your hearts, in a spiritual manifestation; in this true religion consists, and without it there is none. All are interested in what I now say: there must be preparation, something going before to prepare the way for Christ; this is repentance. Consider what repentance is, and you will see how it prepares the soul for Christ, for pardon, happiness, and purity.

1. The first element of repentance is a deep and serious conviction of the fact of our sin.

For if we justify ourselves, there will be no preparation. The converts of John were "baptized by him in Jordan, confessing their sins." See how this prepares; for "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" if you are not guilty, if you have not sinned, you have no interest in the advent of Christ; his incarnation, his sufferings, his death are nothing to you; you have nothing to do with God but as a lawgiver. Go, then, to the throne of God, take his law with you, stand before him, and say, "I am innocent of transgression, both in letter and in spirit." But who could thus stand before the Lord? "In his sight shall no man living be justified." Let your examination, therefore, be thorough: by a deep and serious conviction of your real state as sinners, you prepare the way of the Lord.

2. The second element in repentance is a conviction of the extreme danger of sin, and its infinite desert.

To tell you this truth plainly, there is no true repentance in any heart, unless it be accompanied by a deep conviction that you have exposed yourselves to wrath, and that God would be just in punishing you; and that, terrible as the sentence is, it becomes you to lay your hand upon your mouths, and, from your hearts, confess the sen-

tence just. If you do not believe this, you obstruct the way of the Lord. What need is there of his coming, if the consequences of sin are merely temporal? Why should the Son of God suffer, go through scenes of blood, and die? All this proves unequivocally, that the danger to which sin exposes is extreme. There seems to be no correspondence between humiliations so severe, sorrows so deep, absolute death, except we admit the consequences of sin to be extreme. O, I read that malediction, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them!" not only in the book of God, but in the circumstance that Christ, my Surety, absolutely bowed his head and died. By feeling this, you prepare the way of the Lord.

3. The third element in repentance is a burdened and disquieted spirit.

It is not a cold, intellectual admission of the fact, nor a cold calculation as to the danger. It is a personal fear of the wo, a desire to be delivered from the death, an anxious wish for help. And along with this comes the looking out for this help; for so long as we depend upon ourselves, or rely upon our own powers, we may be assured our repentance is not genuine, or that it is greatly mixed and adulterated. The true effect of the work of John the Baptist on the soul will not only produce a struggle to get free, but a crying out for help from another, conscious that help is not in ourselves. To this the apostle brings the man in a spiritual struggle, in the seventh chapter of the Romans: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" This supposes a feeling that we are not able to deliver ourselves. The way of the Lord is then plain; all obstructions are removed when we come to this; for all true repentance, like the preaching of John the Baptist, concludes by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God!" And then, if the Saviour be received; if, convinced of our helplessness, we cast ourselves on him, flying to him as thus accredited, as the great Deliverer; then, every mountain is levelled, every valley is filled up, all difficulties are removed, and the way becomes plain. "The crooked is made straight," all our strange and confused views are set right; and all the "rough places" we made for ourselves, when we trusted to our own works, which only caused us to sink deeper into the mire, are "made plain." And what follows? Why, as the herald comes on, the sound of his Master's feet is behind him, the voice of the Son of God is heard, and Christ himself appears as the Saviour from sin.

Here, again, worldly men may mistake, and think this interpretation sinks far below the grandeur and majesty of the style of the prophet's announcement. Yet it is here alone that we see the glory of God. For what is the happiness of a pardoned soul, but one of the brightest manifestations of the glory of God upon earth? The herald has gone before; the Master now appears; the soul renounces all hope in itself, and depends upon him alone; and then comes the manifestation of the glory of God,—the man is pardoned, and received into the family of heaven.

Here is a visible manifestation of the glory of the Divine patience; that man, amidst all his repeated provocations, should at last be saved and made happy; the glory of the grace of God. What a comment on the words of the apostle, "By grace are ye saved!" Here man is truly humbled: it is not a voluntary humility; but he feels that he has

nothing. And yet he is pardoned. This is grace. The glory of the merit of the atonement is here signally manifested. That thus men should be saved, however deep their guilt, and have all manner of sin and iniquity forgiven them; and that this should not be confined to individuals, but that all of the race who come into this plan may find mercy and grace; and that nothing but sin and obstinacy can prevent the whole world from tasting the grace! What glory does this reflect on the atonement;—what an illustration of the power of God! The man becomes in one instant a new creature; he walks “not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;” “sin has no dominion over him;” he is brought up out of the pit of clay, rejoices in the paths of righteousness, and runs in the way of obedience. What amazing power it is that can produce this! that can wash the Ethiop white! that can make the leper change his spots! that can give a new turn to all the powers of man, and holy and heavenly aspirations and feelings to him who was so lately a sinner against God! What a manifestation of the Divine condescension! Christ, in this case, has literally come down, and dwells in the soul. Let no man mock at this: if he mocks, he does not understand it. What said Christ? “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” You will allow that there is meaning in the words of Christ; and what is the meaning but a Divine indwelling in the soul, an abiding within, a fulfilling his own word, “Lo, I am with you always?” What is it, but to feel his inward presence, to be guided by his heavenly wisdom, to be succoured by his might; and that, being thus delivered by the Captain of our salvation, we may be among the many sons whom he brings to glory? And then, see the glory of that working of the Divine power by which the soul is finally brought into the enjoyment of all the mind that was in Christ; the process still going on; the soul changing from glory to glory, gradually preparing for the heavenly kingdom; and the work completed by an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom! This is the manifestation of Christ to the soul. Attend,

III. To its allegorical accomplishment.

At this we can but glance. It is seen in the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth. He sends forth his heralds: it is by the ministry of his Gospel that his dominion is established. The doctrine to be preached is that of repentance. So St. Paul preached at Athens. The manifestation of the Master follows. Perhaps two or three only are visited in the first instance; and it is confined for a time to them. But he has passed into the desert of the land, wherever it is, and having begun, he goes on, as it is said here. Every valley is exalted; the people begin to rise up out of their degraded situation, and acquire a more elevated character. The mountain is made low; so that the proud head of imperial Rome is bowed finally before him. And so shall every proud enemy to Christ in every land bow his head, wherever he is manifested. The crooked is made straight. All mysterious and perplexing systems of religion, established in various lands by means of worldly wisdom, till the truth is obscured by speculations, shall at once, by the single glance of this light, be made plain and clear to the view of all. The rough places are made plain. The way of transgressors is, in all cases, hard; it is peculiarly so among the heathen.

Their heavy penances, their severe self inflictions, are indeed rough places. But these are made plain; and then the glory of the Lord is revealed; and he goes on to shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day. Here is a manifestation of the glory of the heavenly wisdom, raising, exalting, and purifying the human intellect; of the Divine righteousness, putting a stop to all cruelty and injury:—the glory of peace and harmony; the union of man's heart to man, the extinction of external wars, and the diffusion of internal harmony:—the glory of that order among families, and societies, and nations, preserved, and sanctified, and so regulated, that no part infringes on the other, but the whole proceeds harmoniously, like a piece of sound mechanism:—the glory of mercy and charity; teaching men to remember those that are in afflictions, as being themselves in like manner afflicted. This is a glory peculiar to the Christian revelation.

And though we see not this, as yet, in every land; yet it is going forward; and we believe it shall be revealed, and the time will come (O glorious time!) when “all flesh shall see it together;” when he will be manifested to all nations, and be adored by all souls. The grand plans of Divine wisdom and mercy shall be accomplished, and Christ shall become “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel.”

You celebrate Christ's coming. O think of that spiritual manifestation of Christ to your souls, without which all will be vain. Vain, did I say? No, not in vain, even then! “This child is set for the rising and fall of many.” It will be an aggravation of your offence, that you ever heard of his advent, or that a herald ever came to prepare his way. You cannot listen to the message with impunity; dangers thicken around you, while you are careless about the Deliverer. O confide in him; lay hold on his salvation; follow his steps; recommend him to those around you; expect his second coming; be among those who wait for him; and when he comes, be you ready to join him.

And at this season think on the poor. Remember Him who, “though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich.” This should be a season, not only of rejoicing but of mercy. Mercy stooped to save us: let us show our mercy to those around us

SERMON CVI.—*Hope the Anchor of the Soul.*

“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil,” Heb. vi, 19.

HOPE is at once one of the most delightful, and one of the most important of our affections. Doubt chills us, and despair withers our mental strength. Fear, ever active in proportion to the loss of hope, fills the imagination with gloomy and distressing anticipations; and to the evils thus darkening the future scenes, man unresistingly surrenders himself. He can make no effort, because he cannot hope. Hope, buried under the superstitions of all other religions, rises with exulting wing from ours. Our God is “the God of hope.” Our Saviour is

“the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope.” The atonement is called “the hope set before us.” And the very habit of every true believer is a “rejoicing in hope.” And in all this, there is nothing merely speculative or ideal, and therefore nothing delusive. The hope of the Christian “maketh not ashamed.” All that he can hope for, all that he can enjoy, even in a higher and glorified state, though now invisible, has a real existence, and is confirmed to him by the infallible word of God. It is prepared, laid up, and reserved for him; so that the apostle says, “By two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie,” that is, his word and his oath, “we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.” Such is the foundation of Christian hope; the truth, the infallible truth of God; the absolute impossibility that a Being of infinite perfection, and therefore a Being of infinite truth, and infinite goodness, should deceive us. Great things in Scripture are ascribed to faith, and not less so to hope. We are called to possess it as the gift of God in Jesus Christ. The assurance, nay, the full assurance, of hope may be ours. And as we are said to be saved by faith, so are we likewise said to be saved by hope. Indeed, faith and hope are terms very frequently interchanged in the language of Scripture; the one being used for the other, in order to show us that where there is a true faith, there must necessarily be a lively hope; and that wherever there is a well-grounded hope, it necessarily implies the existence of a true faith. These graces are so dependent on each other, and their actings are so intertwined, that they cannot, in many instances, be distinguished or separated. It becometh us, therefore, to cultivate this grace, that we may come under all its cheering influences, and daily experience and exemplify that he that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure.

One great office of hope is mentioned in the text; but the imagery which the apostle employs will require a passing remark. The metaphor is double, or, if you please, mixed. He speaks of hope as “an anchor;” and he speaks of it as “entering into that which is within the veil.” The ideas which he wished to express are very obvious. He had been speaking of the certainty of the covenant engagements of God, and the safety of all who are interested in them. Safety suggests the opposite idea of danger. This idea he clothes with a figure which serves, perhaps, better than any other, to convey it at once, and with mighty force, to the imagination. He compares the state of a man, before he flees to the refuge provided for him, to that of a ship at sea, in the midst of the war of the elements, having no port at hand, nor knowing any to which to direct her course. Nothing can more impressively set forth human helplessness and danger. How shall man contend against the elements which are wielded by the arm of God? And as, in a continued and irresistible storm, if no safe harbour be found, into which the vessel may enter, she must, sooner or later, be submerged and engulfed in the waters; so is it with man; sooner or later he must perish, unless he betake himself to the hope set before him. In this urgent distress the Gospel directs to its sheltering and friendly harbour; and the vessel, entering it, drops the anchor beneath the veil of the covering waters, into the invisible ground beneath, and is held sure and steadfast. What that firm ground was, the apostle had no difficulty in pointing out. He could never speak of the safety of man through the

mercy of God, of salvation, without referring at once to the sacrificial death and priestly intercession of Christ; and having his mind filled with that illumination which enabled him, more eminently than any other of the apostles, to explain the mysteries and symbols of the old dispensation, the poetical idea of the anchor being cast within the veil of the covering waters, into the invisible ground beneath, seems at once to remind him of the veil of the holy of holies, and those invisible realities which it typified, and which are both the objects and sure ground of the Christian's hope. He therefore represents this hope as entering into that within the veil; laying hold upon it; and thus, as the anchor, which is cast within the veil of the covering waters, fixing the soul in security and peace, making it sure and steadfast.

I. I call your attention, in the first place, to that within the veil, which is at once the ground and the object of the believing hope of every true Christian.

The veil, you will recollect, separated the most holy place from the other parts of the temple. This separated and holiest place was the special residence of God, and was the type of the heavenly world. The objects, therefore, of a Christian's hope are laid up in heaven, not on earth; and the ground on which he fixes it, and by which his spirit is kept sure and steadfast, is "within the veil."

Within the veil, now rent and parted to the eye of faith and hope, we behold,

1. A manifestation of God under the new and evangelical relation of God reconciled to his offending creatures.

And this is a special manifestation; such a one as is only found within the veil; such a view of God as can be obtained no where else, and is therefore the only ground of hope to the sinner. For how shall a sinful man—and of sinful man we are now speaking—hope in God? The fact of his transgression cannot be denied; and the penalty of transgression, death, flames in terrible revelations from the tables of the law, written by God's own finger, and along every line of the preceptive parts of both the Old and New Testaments, given by his inspiration. If, then, I go not to God within the veil, I must go to him in his natural majesty, and seek, from some of his natural attributes, a ground to hope that the sentence shall not be executed: but these instantly flash on me in the insufferable blaze of a holiness which cannot connive at sin, because it is holiness; and of a justice rigidly requiring from every one what is properly due, and weighing out, in equal scales, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doeth evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek;" and from every thing in God of a milder character on which hope might attempt to fix, it is frowned away by these sterner attributes. Thanks be to God, we can go to him as within the veil, and behold another sight; a manifestation which shall encourage, and not affright us. We see him there upon the throne of grace, the mercy seat, purposely to administer the blessings of reconciliation. Within the veil the great High Priest has entered with the atoning blood, and the mercy seat is sprinkled with it. The sign of the grand, the eternal, and accepted sacrifice is upon it. The Father is well pleased, and graciously reveals himself as reconciling the world unto himself through Jesus Christ, receiving every penitent prayer, and administering pardon to every

humbled spirit that trusts in the great atonement. The majesty remains, but the terror is gone; justice now beams forth with as mild a ray as mercy; and hope, cheered by so Divine a scene, casts her anchor "within the veil;" amidst every storm rests on the sure, the immovable ground of the attributes of God, all harmonized through the great atonement, and consenting to the acceptance of guilty but penitent man. And thus is the soul kept sure and steadfast.

2. There is a second sight within the veil which attracts the attention, and fixes the exercises of our hope; and that is, the priesthood of our Saviour.

We have spoken of the oblation of his blood, that which, sprinkling the mercy seat, renders it possible with God to be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth. But we are to recollect, brethren, that Christ "abideth a Priest continually;" we are to recollect that his administration extends through all time; that, in one word, to use the delightful language of St. Paul, "he appeareth in the presence of God for us;" and whenever we draw near to him, and enter into that within the veil, then must we see Christ in the continual exercise of his priestly office for us, on our behalf, and for our benefit. What an encouragement to faith and hope is this! Meditate upon these words,—his appearing in the presence of God for us; for us who believe; for us who have obtained redemption through his blood, and the remission of sins: for it is his atonement and intercession which continually stand between us and the unbending demands of the law we have broken; but for that intercession we should again fall under condemnation, and be liable to the penalty of sin; but it stands, I say, continually between us and the demands of a broken law; and while constant faith brings us the constant benefits of this meritorious intercession, and the constant assurance of our present pardon and acceptance, hope, looking forward into the future, anticipates the continuance of that sweet sense of pardoning mercy, sees still the goodness of God as manifested in the land of the living, and throughout the whole period of life, until the same blessed assurance of the Divine mercy shall extract the sting from death itself, and lead us in peace and joy into the presence of God.

He appeareth for us to give effect to our prayers: that is another end of the intercession of Christ, of his continued priesthood. All the prayers we offer now, and all the prayers we shall offer, shall be rendered acceptable to God, and prevalent with him. At no period of our life, indeed, can we come to God in prayer under the idea that we merit an answer of peace: the prayer which our Lord himself taught us has cut off all that; it teaches us to say, whenever we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." We never come to God but as trespassers, as sinners; that is always our character; and sinners can merit nothing. We can have, therefore no acceptance in prayer but through the merit of another, that is, through the peace-speaking blood of our Saviour's atonement; through the intercession which he has founded on it; the interest he has with God, and which he employs to give effect to our prayers. For "I saw an angel," says St. John, "having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." So he presents our services, perfumed with the incense of his own merit; and they are, therefore, rendered acceptable

to God, and come up before him as a sweet-smelling savour. What an encouragement, not merely to faith, for present blessings, but to hope, which fixes on all future blessings! Looking into that which is within the veil, we see an arrangement which encourages our entire trust as to the future. We pray, pleading, not our own merit, but the merit of Him in whom the Father is well pleased, and whose prayers for us are never offered in vain; for, "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins;" an Advocate who, in the days of his flesh, said to the Father, "I know that thou hearest me always."

And then, Christ appears in the presence of God for us, as our representative. He has gone within the veil in our nature; he is gone in a public, in a federal character, as the Head of all the race, but especially of his Church, the Head of all those who are in covenant with him. And there is no subject more calculated to support our hope, and to present an eternal barrier between our souls and despair, even in the darkest moments, than that mysterious intercommunity of relations, sympathies, interests, and glories, which this important arrangement implies. Christ, having taken our nature, having entered into the lowliness of our condition, having experimentally acquainted himself with all the weaknesses and all the sorrows of our humanity, having thus suffered, being tempted, he knows, in consequence of these exercises, how to sympathize with them that are tempted, and how to succour them; and has taken our nature up into heaven, to show that he is still most intimately connected with our race: he who pleads for us there, and manages our cause, is indeed bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. It is in this view that the apostle, in the second chapter of this same epistle, speaks so emphatically: "For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Forasmuch then as the children,"—both brethren and children are the names by which he calls his people,—“forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” When hope has such an object before her, well may she enter within the veil, and drop her anchor there in the eternal suitableness, and in the constant prevalence, of the intercession of Jesus Christ, and thus keep the soul sure and steadfast.

3. But within the veil there is another object, which the apostle, viewing it in its comprehensive fulness, presents to us as including “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” This refers more particularly to the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the communication of spiritual blessings through him.

For it is most important to be noted, that the triune God is within the veil; and let it be noted, for our special encouragement, that each

person in the blessed trinity is connected with this sacrificial scene, and the administration of grace through it, and thus becomes the object of our hope. So when Isaiah had a vision of the glory of the Lord of hosts in the temple, it was Jehovah in three persons who was manifested unto him. He heard the seraphim, as they stood with their veiled faces before the throne, ascribing glory and praise to each of the three persons as one Jehovah of infinite perfection and majesty. And if the temple on earth had this revelation, surely not less the temple in heaven, the very place of the ministry of our great High Priest. Yes, brethren, it is there; and whenever hope enters within the veil, the blessed Spirit shall be seen, out of his boundless love to man, placing himself under the ministration of Christ, that new life, life both holy and happy, may be given to all them that believe. He may, indeed, be seen elsewhere; as when he brooded over chaos, and reduced it to order; as when, by his life-breathing power, he continues the generations of animals, and covers the earth with verdure; but he is chiefly seen "within the veil," and in connection with the great work of our redemption. John saw the throne, and Him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne. He saw, also, the seven spirits which are before the throne; the Spirit in the fulness and power of his influences, placing himself under the administration of Christ, to be given by him for the furtherance of the great objects of his love. Hence we find him inspiring the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, and so completing for us the sacred volume of eternal truth. It is he who convinces the world of sin, who awakens and quickens the soul of man from spiritual death; it is under his influence that faith is created, and hope and all other graces are implanted and matured; it is by him that we draw near to God in continual prayer, as the helper of our infirmities; it is through him that we have communion with the Father, and with the Son. He thus performs all those offices in subservience to the great designs of redemption, and is always ready to be administered by Christ from within the veil. The first grand administration of him was after Christ ascended, and went within the veil, and then poured out from heaven that glorious and visible influence which was made manifest on the day of pentecost. But then we should greatly narrow our view of the subject, if we confined the effect of these operations of the Holy Spirit merely to his miraculous gifts. That which the apostles received in addition was infinitely more valuable than these gifts, however important they were to the success of their public ministry. The visible tongues of fire were only emblems of what had passed within. It was indeed a baptism of fire to them. What new creatures did they now become! They were raised from earthliness to spirituality. Their gross conceptions of the kingdom of Christ were purged away. The bright flame irradiated their dim eyes to perceive the true and full meaning of the sacred Scriptures, kindled the ardour of an unquenchable love to Christ, and transformed them into bright reflections of his own purity. They came together the sincere, but timid and partially enlightened, followers of Christ; and they departed full of light, and power, and love. My brethren, that on which I wish to fix your attention is, that whenever we draw near to God through his Son, we are to regard this part of the arrangement of mercy, that provision is made for the constant ad-

ministration of the Spirit. Christ now baptizes with the Holy Ghost and with fire. There is to be a constant, though secret, pentecost, as to every Christian. The sacred baptisms are inexhaustible to all who fix their faith and hope on the office and power of Christ to administer them, and the gracious condescension and readiness of the Spirit to be thus administered. He that thus comes to God shall receive this mighty influence; and it is our own fault that we do not live in a richer experience of it. Yes, brethren, the celestial gift is yours. You are called to receive the heavenly element which spreads an intensity of spiritual light through the understanding and conscience; kindles and feeds the secret fire of devotion; converts, like the warmth of summer, the dark and sterile soul into life, and verdure, and fruitfulness; animates every affection; invigorates for every service; gives vital pulses to the courage; and strengthens in all conflicts; nor terminates its sacred operations till it has purged from the heart of man all its stains of sin, all its debasing alloy of earthliness, and rendered it to God, meet for high fellowship and intercourse with him for ever and ever. Look within the veil, and see this fulness of spiritual blessings laid up for you in heavenly places in Christ. Having once entered there, he abideth a Priest continually, and hath received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, that he may pour forth Divine influences upon all his followers. Thus do we see the triune God engaged in carrying on the great redeeming plan. How high may not our expectations rise? And may we not all join in the doxology,—

“To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Who sweetly all agree,
To save a world of sinners lost,
Eternal glory be?”

There is no influence to preserve man from evil, to prepare him for all the duties and all the dangers of life, and to fit him for entering into the immediate presence of God, which shall be denied to him whose hope thus enters within the veil, and waits “for the promise of the Father.”

4. Finally, on this part of the subject, we not only see within the veil a special manifestation of God, the priesthood of Christ, the union of the three persons in the Godhead, in the work of our redemption, and the gifts and operations of the Spirit, constituting that fulness of spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ which we are taught to expect; but there are other scenes which, if not the ground of our hope, are, at least, the delightful objects of it.

In a verse which follows the text there is an expression of great emphasis, “Whither,” says the apostle, “the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” Well, then, if Christ is the Forerunner, others have followed him, and have entered within the veil; all the apostles have passed within the veil; all the first disciples, who followed him through the reproaches and persecutions of the first ages; all, in fact, from that time to the present, who have died in the faith, have gone within the veil with our great Forerunner. Here, indeed, is a scene for hope to fix her steady gaze upon; and when we thus behold the multitude which no man can number, who keep their eternal Sabbath in that sanctuary above, shall we not be cheered with the songs sung there, and which we hope ourselves one day to learn, and encouraged

to pass through the various troubles and exercises of this present state, seeing that the way into the holiest of all is indeed made manifest, and that we may follow those who have entered the veil, and are now in the presence of God? In the delightful vision which the interior of the sanctuary presents, there is every thing to quicken and encourage our hope: their very multitude, which, it is said, no man could number, what speaks it but the span and extent of the Divine mercy, the riches and the power of Divine grace, proving that God willeth not the death of a sinner, but that he willeth that all men should be saved; demonstrating that his designs are vast and extensive, and not narrow and confined; so that it is the fault of every human being that is lost, and his own fault alone, that he enters not there? Consider, too, the cheering fact, that this multitude is not a multitude of angels, who have kept their first estate, but a multitude of men, once, like ourselves, residents in this low earth, but now inhabitants of heaven. The same bridge by which they passed over the great gulf between sinful man and the heaven of a holy God, is built for us; the same shining track by which they travelled shall remain till time shall be no more; and as all who seek this "way of peace" shall find it, so all who travel by it to the end of life shall join the redeemed from the earth in the sanctuary which the veil now hides from our view. And then, they were not innocent men, but sinners, who had to wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb; and some of them were among the guiltiest; yet were all their deep stains washed away in that fountain for sin and uncleanness which still stands open to us. Their lot in the world, too, was similar to our own; they were taken from the same walks of business as those in which you move, from the same paths of labour, from the scenes of change, and sickness, and sorrow, and, perhaps, of humiliation and contempt, through which you may now be passing yourselves; yet, notwithstanding that they moved precisely in the same circumstances in which we now move, and were, to all external appearance, as far distant as we from glory, honour, and immortality, yet are they within the veil. What you are now, they were once; and you see this to inspire you with hope, to show you that, by the same grace, what they are now, you shall be hereafter. Yes, and they had the same spiritual conflicts; they had to pass not only through the same scenes of sorrow, but through the same snares and temptations, and dangers. You feel the pressure of earth, and so once did they: you have often been wounded by unfaithfulness, and so were they: your startling fears sometimes rise up, and faith, for the moment, wavers; and so was it once with them. Have you said, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul?" A thousand times did they sigh out the same sentiment. You shudder occasionally, as you think of entering the gloomy valley of the shadow of death; and so did they once, but they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and they are now within the veil, where no enemy can reach them, and they wave their triumphant palms before your sight to animate your courage, and inspire you with hope. O brethren, when we consider these demonstrations of the efficacy of Divine grace; when we thus discover that all things are possible to man in the exercise of a simple faith and lively hope; that he may thus trample under foot all the power of the enemy, and the fear of death itself, and, at last, following the great Forerunner,

enter within the veil, and dwell for ever in the presenee of God ; well may hope, putting aside the veil, and discovering suelh scenes, flee to them for refuge, and, taking hold on objects so exciting and eneou- raging, even amidst the currents and storms of life, preserve the soul sure and steadfast.

II. There are, however, two or three practical lessons, which we may learn from this subject.

1. And the first is, the necessity of fleeing for refuge, as the apostle expresses it, to lay hold on the hope thus set before you.

How many of you are out of this refuge ? How many of you have livcd, that is to say, without repentance toward God, without a saving faith in Christ, without a sense of forgiveness and aacceptanee, still in the spirit of the world, and under the dominion of sensc, and therefore out of this refuge ? And to what does the apostle compare your condition ? As I have said, to a frail bark in the mighty oeean, exposed to a raging tempest, having no port to which to direct her course, and when, consequently, the vessel must, under the continued and heighten- ing rage of the storm, be ultimately lost. Perhaps you hear no tem- pest at present ; all appears smooth and calm ; you give your sails to the wind, and your streamers to the sun, and you think to surmount every wave, and weather all the storms of life ; and you cry, in mad ignorance of your danger, "Pcaee and safety," and wonder at all these alarming declarations as to coming destruction. Many have presumed before you, till the floods of their ungodliness have risen against them, and made them afraid. What, are you never to die ? Arc you never to be brought to look narrowly and at hand upon eternity ? Arc you never to be judged ? Arc you never to see the final scene of this world's desolation ? Arc you never to behold the Saviour, whom you have slighted, coming in his glory and in that of his Father, no longer to administer grace, but to take vengeance on them that know him not and reject the Gospel ? These are the scenes you must witness, these the storms that must arise ; and when they have arisen, if you have neglected to flee to this refuge in time, then, brethren, let it be remem- bered, that in suelh moments there can possibly be no relief. O be per- suaded of the necessity there is of entering into this refuge now ; the necessity of putting your souls out of the reach of hazard ! You ought not to live another moment without taking this all-important step ; then, indeed, if you flee to the merey of God in Christ, if you obtain a sense of acceptance with him, if you have the blessed assurance that you are his, if you are conscious that you have given up your whole heart to him, then you may rest and be at peacee, all is well, whatever may be your external eircumstances. And, O, it is the greatest infatu- ation and madness for an immortal being, treading on the verge of death and eternity, and liable every moment to be swept away by the just vengcanee of almighty God, and banished for ever from his pre- sence, to endanger his greatest interests, to rest contented and secure while he is liable to this condemnation ! O flee to the refuge and make an effort to lay hold on it !

2. Let those who have thus fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them, feel the duty they owe to others who are still exposed to the danger which themselves have happily escaped.

What that danger is, you know, for you have felt it ; but you are now

in the haven. O care for those who are still without ! Many have sunk in the devouring gulf, sunk in your very sight ; many more will perish ; yet is it your duty to erect the friendly beacon which may invite them to the haven, and tell them of safe anchorage and peace. The apostle dwells on this particularly : “ Be ye, therefore,” he says, “ blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom shine ye as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.” He then makes reference to the light kindled at the entrance of a harbour, in a dark night, in order to guide thither the vessels in danger of being lost in the storm. It is the duty of a Christian, having himself found safety and shelter in the port, to be a guide to others in danger ; and, in order to this, he must at once take care of his words and his works ; he must be blameless and harmless, a child of God without rebuke. Others once did this kind office for you ; do it now for those who are even as you once were yourselves. Many will disregard you ; but when the storm is felt, when the floods of their ungodliness make them afraid, many will listen, seek to anchor on the same ground, and to join in your songs of deliverance. Be most anxious thus to impress and thus to guide them ; remember their souls are at stake ; and let the lights you elevate be bright and distinct.

3. Let those who have entered into this port, and have cast their anchor there, be prepared for storms.

Let them not cherish the fancy that they are as yet wholly secure : even while the vessel is at anchor a storm may arise, and, if the anchorage be unsafe, or the anchor or the cable fail, she may be driven out to sea, and wrecked after all. Brethren, in your case the anchorage can never fail ; the ground beneath, into which hope casts her anchor, can never deceive you ; it takes hold of the “ two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie.” But the cable may be bad, and unable to withstand the strain upon it ; or you may let it go. Take care, then, of faith and hope ; yield not to unbelief ; give no place to despair. While you have this hope as an anchor of the soul, you shall be sure and steadfast.

The great business of our life, having entered the friendly port and cast anchor there,—to lay aside the figure,—having laid hold on the immutable promise of God, and resting on it by faith and hope,—must be to take care that our faith and hope do not fail. If you ask how this vigour of faith and hope is to be preserved, I answer, in a word, by entering within the veil. The grand secret lies there, and there only ; every thing depends on that. Let us be spiritually minded ; let our thoughts be frequently within the veil ; let us watch against all distraction, and keep all the great realities of which I have been speaking continually before us. Our thoughts, I grant, must often be in the world, but they need not be worldly ; we may, we ought to cast out of our spirits all that is low and trifling. If we should rise into intellectual speculations, we should still be too low. Were we, with the astronomer, to dwell among these material suns and stars, we should still be too low. The humblest Christian has a higher flight and a loftier home. In the very heaven of heavens we may come in our affections and hopes, while yet sojourners and pilgrims on earth. The veil is rent in twain ; the interior of the sanctuary is revealed to your de-

vout meditation ; and it is by keeping these exalted realities before you that your faith and hope may grow exceedingly.

And not merely are our thoughts to be exercised upon subjects of this sort, but we are to make, what I may call realizing efforts as to them. There is much implied in that saying of the apostle, "Laying hold of the hope set before us." Our faith is to be renewed continually in its liveliest actings, in its entire dependence on Christ, claiming, through his merits, the very fulness of promised blessings ; and our hope to fix on all those great and blessed prospects which the mercy of God sets before us ; that so having a lively hope, that is, a hope that shall invigorate and support us, it may also be a hope that shall sanctify us ; for "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He also is pure."

And every thing leads us to this. The very emptiness of the creature : for it reminds us that something else is demanded to satisfy the cravings of our spirit. The word of truth : for whenever we open it, these are the great subjects that present themselves. The ordinances of religion,—prayer, praise, all invite us within the veil, and reprove our spiritless exercises when we do not enter there. All call us to heavenly mindedness ; and blessed are we when we abide in this state. Now the countenance of God shines upon us ; now the priestly intercession pleads and avails for us ; now the Spirit's sacred fire descends upon us ; now we unite with them already within the veil in their ascriptions of praise to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and with them we sing, "Worthy the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne." O for a brighter view ! O for a nearer approach ! Teach us, blessed Saviour, ever to follow thee ; teach us, in our spirits, ever to dwell where thou art ; till we follow thee, our great Forerunner, within the veil, whither thou hast entered for us, and abide with thee for ever. Amen.

SERMON CVII.—*The Parable of the Good Samaritan.*

Preached in behalf of the Hull Infirmary.

"And who is my neighbour ?" Luke x, 29.

AMONG many other purposes for which the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, the correction of mistakes on religious subjects was not the least important. He appeared in an age of great corruption and error. The Gentiles had lost the traditions of the ancient religion of the patriarchs ; and the Jew had lost the meaning of his own law. In vain did the sacred oracles remain in his hands ; he had made them void by his own traditions.

This tendency in man to corrupt religion is a subject of momentous reflection. It exhibits, in the most striking manner, the weakness of man's reason, and the viciousness of his will and affections. So far is human reason from possessing a capacity to discover original truth, that when she has it, she appears in many cases unable to use it aright. So far from being able to conduct a voyage of religious discovery, she dashes her bark upon the rocks, even when she has both chart and

compass to direct her course. Her eye seems darkened to blindness by the very lustre of revelation.

Nor does the corruption of religion less prove the wickedness of man. That indeed must be a polluted world where religion itself cannot exist without being contaminated with that which is earthly, sensual, and devilish. No sooner has it been given to man in successive dispensations, than it has begun to lose its purity. Like a highly-polished mirror, it has been dimmed by the breath of those who have looked into it; and this circumstance has rendered it necessary, in order to preserve truth from utter extinction, and to give it renewed efficiency, that other dispensations should take place to restore, and to purify, and brighten, what has been corrupted and darkened by the folly and wickedness of man.

The office of Christ was, therefore, not only to reveal what was unknown, to give new commandments, and to establish new doctrines, but to exhibit the former communications of heavenly wisdom in their primitive simplicity and meaning. A great part of his sermon on the mount is taken up with such corrections; and in the story with which the text is connected, he disencumbers the second great commandment of the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" of the interpretations with which bigotry and selfishness had veiled its meaning, and presents it in its original extent and comprehensiveness of obligation. The inspired evangelist says, "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" This point had been debated. The Gentile was not the neighbour. The Samaritan was not the neighbour. These were settled decisions. Even among the more devout Jews it seems to have been disputed how far the precept extended. The question was determined by Christ in the beautiful parable, or real history, which follows: "And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise."

The grand moral of the whole is, that every man in distress, of

whatever country, of whatever rank, profession, and character, is our neighbour. To him we are to stretch out the hand of relief; and with respect to him the law, which is equally the law of Moses and of Christ, authoritatively enjoins, "Thou shalt love him as thyself." On this principle of universal benevolence, so inculcated as not to be mistaken, without wilful perverseness, we shall make a few general observations.

We may observe,

I. That God has established a principle of universal dependence through every part of his intelligent creation.

As creatures we have a twofold dependence,—a dependence upon God, and upon our fellows. As soon might we have created ourselves, as preserve ourselves. The whole universe trembles over the gulf of eternal nothingness, and is only preserved by the power of the Almighty. In God we live, and move, and have our being. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power. Our dependence upon God is a necessary dependence. The dependence of a creature upon his fellows is not necessary, but the result of a wise and gracious appointment.—We may conceive of a universe of creatures, all holy and happy too, each of which might be distinct from the other; each fixed in his own centre, and connected with nothing but God. It is, however, evident that such beings must be very different from those pure and happy spirits that we read of in the word of truth, and with whom we hope to be associated in the kingdom of our Father. Among them there could be no mutual love; for there could be no intercourse between them. Their heaven must be reduced to that of mere internal contemplation; for if a sphere of action were assigned to them, they must also be the subjects of action. If they are employed as ministers, they must also be ministered unto. In that case of entire individuality, cut off from each other, and occupied only on their own interests, all the admiration they now feel in the displays of God's power and wisdom, in the creation and government of all things,—all the concern they take in the affairs of each other, and in the affairs of men, with all the emotions of benevolence and joy,—would have no place in their hearts. New worlds might rise from the dark abyss of night; but no "morning stars" would "sing together," and no sons of God shout for joy. New creatures might people the earth beneath them, and offer large opportunities of benevolent activity; but the isolated beings in question could not enter into their concerns. They would not have ministered to the Saviour, nor have carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. John would not have seen one of these angels flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach upon the earth. This, however, is not the order of God. By the principle of universal benevolence, and of mutual dependence, created minds glow with kind emotions, and find their happiness in action. They give and receive; and increase by sharing the common stock of felicity. Hence, when symbolical representations of the heavenly powers were made to the mind of the prophet, he not only saw them before the throne, veiling their faces before the glory of God, and singing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory," but "each one had six wings;" the expressive emblems of that active zeal and ceaseless benevolence with which they execute the Lord's commands, and minister to his creatures.

This is the order of God. So he intended that all heaven and earth should be connected; that the golden chain of love should bind and harmonize, in mutual dependence and relation, his universal family, whether in heaven about his throne, on earth his footstool, or in those distant tracks of space where his power has given being to creatures in his likeness and ours. In this the angels set before us a bright example for our imitation; for it is at once to be our constant aim and prayer, that in the exercise of mutual benevolence, as well as in cheerful and uninterrupted obedience, we may do the will of our Father upon earth, as the angels do it in heaven. Even "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" and addressing his disciples upon a memorable occasion, he said, "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye do well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

As this is the order which God hath established through the whole intelligent creation, we may observe,

II. That among men, and especially among fallen and guilty men, the principle of benevolence, which expresses itself in a readiness to administer to the necessities of others, is not only a mere arrangement of wisdom and goodness, but has in it the force of duty and obligation.

The ground of this doctrine it is easy to point out.

When man became a sinner, the earth was cursed with comparative barrenness; and on him the hard term of existence was imposed, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." This was partly a punishment, and partly a correction. Fulness of bread and idleness would have more greatly encouraged sin. This condition of human existence remains in full force to this day. Hence we see the folly and presumption of those systems of equality, those levelling principles of our own day, which have produced so much disorder in society. No state of society can exist, which shall exempt man from the fruit of his sin. In the sweat of his face he must eat bread.

The very culture of the earth, and the manufacture of its produce, in the variety of human labour, must, however, produce riches, not in sufficient quantity, that, if equally shared, all would be exempted from painful labour,—for that would be to contravene God's own decree,—but to exempt some part of society from the drudgery and affliction of the rest. When such exemptions are, however, made by Divine Providence, they impose duties; and by them the system of mutual dependence is exemplified. God has, by these distinctions, evidently thrown the care of the poor upon the rich.

They that think must govern them that toil; but they ought so to govern as most effectually to promote the comfort of those who are under subjection. Every man who becomes rich is made so by the labours of the poor; and when those labours are interrupted by sickness, accident, or age, then it becomes a matter of obligation to relieve our indigent and suffering brethren. "Thou shalt never forget thy poor brother, as long as thou livest," was the benevolent injunction of the Jewish lawgiver. "The poor," says Jesus, "ye have always with

you." And the apostle takes up the same sentiment, when he says, "Be willing to communicate, glad to distribute; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

III. The benevolence enjoined in the parable before us derives great force from the terms in which it is expressed. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is the language of the law. "Who is my neighbour?" asks the lawyer. The answer is, "Every man in distress is thy neighbour."

Properly speaking, a neighbour is a person who lives near us, and with whom we may be presumed to be in habits of acquaintance and intercourse. Christ forbids us to limit the law to the term "neighbour," used only in this sense. But in representing every man of every country as our neighbour, did he intend to break down all those peculiar regards which spring out of intercourse and kind offices, and render our affections equal to all mankind? I presume not. This is a refinement of modern times. What is called the "citizenship of the world," is recommended so as to destroy patriotism; and it would destroy all domestic ties which are founded upon the same associations. The advocates for this system are noted for their unfeelingness. The idea intended to be conveyed by Christ seems to be, that we are neighbour to every man in distress, in danger, and liability to suffering; and that this ought to operate more powerfully upon our feelings of compassion than mere proximity of place. Thus the Samaritan was neighbour to the man who fell among thieves. He saw him suffering in a nature common to them both; suffering an accident which he himself might suffer; needing comforts which he himself might need; and in the spirit of neighbourhood, his proximity to the same condition, he relieved him.

Thus an apostle enjoins sympathy toward persons in suffering circumstances, knowing that we ourselves also "are in the body." And this consideration will always have its full effect upon the considerate mind. We are neighbours to the distresses of every man. Amidst all the sad variety of human woe, which comes under our notice, what kind of distress is there to which any of us can say, we are not liable to it? Have we a charter of exemption from poverty, from calumny, from ingratitude? Can we tell that we shall not outlive our friends, and our comforts? Carry we not about with us the seeds of disease? and do not distressing accidents every day prowl about our path? View the changing scene of things in which you live; and say how near are we to every man's distresses, however distant our rank. "The fashion of this world passeth away."

"Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
To push us to the tomb;
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home."

Let your liability to every kind of suffering teach you sympathy; for you yourselves "are yet in the body."

Obvious as these principles are, and fully as these views recommend themselves to the dispassionate mind, we may observe,

IV. That they are unhappily often counteracted in practice.

The introduction of sin has subjected us to misery, and rendered us more dependent upon each other; but it has also introduced principles

into the heart which are subversive of those charities to which our very necessities and common dangers ought to give birth. Like mariners in a storm, like soldiers in a battle, we ought to be at hand to assist each other; but there are principles which too frequently separate man from man, and harden the heart against every emotion of pity. We might specify many of these, but we will confine our attention to one, suggested by the parable; I mean religious bigotry. The parable is founded upon a happy exemption from this hateful feeling; the humane Samaritan was superior to it. The Jews and Samaritans were separated from each other by a religious quarrel; and so hostile were they to each other, that they refused all mutual intercourse: "The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans." It would have been well if this could have been affirmed of them only. It is, however, unnecessary to dwell upon so obvious a truth, that religious bigotry, in every age, has counteracted benevolent feeling, given an adamant hardness to the heart, and dyed itself red with nameless cruelties. The inference, however, which is so frequently drawn, to the discredit of religion itself, is not to be admitted. Perhaps the great hold which the very name of religion takes upon the mind, and the manner in which its stupendous objects seize upon and agitate the passions, may, in part, account for the bitterness of unhallowed zeal, and the mischief of religious animosities. Like all great powers when misdirected, it becomes dangerous and destructive; but religion itself is saved from discredit by the fact, that it has no connection with such feelings. The God of universal love never shrunk to the contracted measure of a bigot; the fire with which he animates a pious heart, is never commixed with the explosions of earthly passion. The religion which consists in outward forms chiefly is the nurse of bigotry. This was seen in the Jewish Church; it is seen in the corrupted part of the Christian Church; and is, indeed, matter of daily observation. But the religion of the Son of God is a religion of principle; it is faith working by love; it is charity, the bond of perfectness; and where that prevails there can be no anger, hatred, and malice. I contend not for indifference in religious matters. I should not be man if I had not a party; I should not be a Christian if I had not love. Thank God, we live in an age in which the rancorous spirit of party is subsiding; when we learn that to differ is not to disagree; when good men of all parties seek a common neutral ground on which they can meet; when they ask what they can do together; and in which there is co-operation for the common benefit. We live in an age when a distressed man is not asked whether he be a Jew or a Samaritan; when, with a distinctness of sect as marked as ever, there is a oneness more obvious than ever; when Christians of various names, according to the apostolic view of their true designation, shine not merely as the lights of their own little horizon, but as the lights of the world; and while,—still to pursue the apostle's figure,—like the heavenly bodies, they move in their own orbits, and, like them, they break not the solemn calm of the heavens with a hostile crash, but gently mingle their rays, and enlighten and bless the world below them.

V. Lastly, let me observe, that the universal and undistinguishing philanthropy, so affectingly urged in the parable of our Lord before us,

must be fostered and matured by every consideration we can pay to the nature of our religion.

What is the character under which it presents the God we worship? As loving to every man, and exercising tender mercy over all his works; as causing his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sending rain upon the just and the unjust; as kind even to the evil and unthankful.

What is the Saviour which it exhibits to our faith? "The Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe;" who "gave himself a ransom for all;" and who, "by the grace of God, tasted death for every man."

What is the account which it gives us of the origination of the human race? That God "hath made of one blood all the nations of men who dwell upon the face of the earth." What a contrast to many of the schemes of paganism, which represented men as originally and essentially different from each other!

What is the great condition of salvation which our religion establishes? It is faith in Christ; but a faith which worketh by love, both to God and man; which purifies the heart from every selfish and malignant feeling; and which, by bringing the mind into a state of blessed union with Christ, renders it like him in purity and benevolence.

What is the standard of our piety? The mind that was in Christ; the mind of him "who went about doing good."

What are the views of eternal rewards given us by the Gospel, which we have received as a revelation from God? That those rewards are assigned to holy and benevolent actions; not because they are meritorious, but to encourage them.

Such are the true views of our religion. Place your hearts under its influence; what a happy change will then be effected in them! Not an angry passion, not a feeling of revenge, will then retain their dominion over you; you will have the entire control and government of your spirits. The influence of this change will be felt by all around you; you will live to do good; and your whole heart will be filled with gratitude to God, and good will to men; your time, talents, property, will be all consecrated to God, and he will accept the sacrifice; you will be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. The indigent and afflicted, especially, will find in you a friend and a brother. As the result of your unwearied charity, the blessing of him that is ready to perish will come upon you; and you will cause the widow's heart to sing for joy. Above all, the God of infinite and universal love will cheer you by his smile, and at last place upon your head the crown of righteousness which fadeth not away.

SERMON CVIII.—*Inward Religion.*

"But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God," Rom. ii, 29.

MAN's obligations to worship God, and obey his laws, are generally acknowledged. Did we not know human nature, the inference would be, that man is a very religious being, and that his heart must be pow-

erfully influenced by the truths he acknowledges, and the prayers he offers up. The contrary, however, is the fact. How are we to account for it? It may be accounted for in this way: While the obligations of religion are acknowledged, and its services, under some form or other, observed, yet is man the slave of sin; and his principles and practices have, therefore, been thus at variance with the convictions of his understanding. We cannot doubt, from these facts, but that man has the dreadful power of deceiving himself; that there is scarcely any error into which he falls more easily than into religious delusion,—into the habit of thinking that he does God service, even while he disobeys the plainest commands, and that by outward religious performances he atones for the disregard of moral obligations. However absurd this theory may be in its principles, yet it is one that has in all ages influenced and deceived mankind. If we were, indeed, to mention the proposition quite abstracted from men's prejudices and interests, and from their love of sin, and ask them, whether they really thought that God could possibly be pleased with any services which did not include the obedience of the heart and life, they would at once acknowledge that such a supposition was absurd in the extreme. But when it comes to their mind in connection with their sins, and prejudices, it is both admitted and acted upon.

We find this illustrated in the case of the Jews. They had many means of knowing the will of God; and they had a form and mode of worship established by Divine authority; and yet this very people drew near to God with their lips, while their heart was far from him. This very people, plainly as they were taught the contrary, fell into the error of depending on their sacrifices and offerings, as though they were meritorious in themselves, and sufficient to discharge them from the obligation of loving God with all their hearts, and their neighbour as themselves. They were Jews outwardly, and their circumcision was outward in the flesh, and not of the heart. And even under Christianity itself, though the religion of the Spirit, and though its whole constitution is intended to lead men from the shadow to the substance, and from the form to the power; even under this system has man deceived himself, and as extensively under this system as under any other. Led by the delusive idea, that there was something excellent and meritorious in the profession and observance of a religion whose spirituality they were willing in words to acknowledge, in that profession and acknowledgment they have rested. They have had the form of godliness, while they have, perhaps, even denied the power. And though it is true that the forms under which Christianity is presented to us at the present day are far less superstitious than formerly, is it not possible that we may admit the truth contained in the text, that "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly;" is it not possible that we may assent to our Lord's declaration, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" and yet, perhaps almost unconsciously, consider our very admission of these truths as having something of excellence and merit about it, which shall recommend us to the favour of God, independently of our moral state? If this tendency to turn religion from its proper purpose only arose from accidental circumstances, we might, perhaps, be out of danger; but when we find it prevailing to such an extent as to justify us in pro-

nouncing it universal ; when men, in all ages, and in all countries, have fallen into the same error ; we may be sure that it does not proceed from any thing accidental, but may be traced up to a common source, and that the corruption of human nature,—the natural aversion of man to place his spirit entirely under the government and discipline of God. Now, if these facts can thus be traced up to a cause universally operative, then are we all in danger, and constantly in danger. To guard you against it, let me remind you of the text. “He is a Jew which is one inwardly ;” and, by consequence, he is a Christian who is one inwardly ; “and circumcision,” the seal of the Jewish covenant, and therefore baptism, the seal of the Christian covenant, “is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

The subject thus presented to us is inward religion,—its nature and design. And though I do not profess to suggest any thing new on the subject, yet will the end be answered, if our minds be stirred up by way of remembrance.

Let us endeavour to enter into the subject of inward religion, by observing,

I. That it is found in the state of the understanding.

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.” This passage, as well as many others, does seem very plainly to indicate that it is in this faculty of the mind that the work of Divine grace commences, in order to bring into a right state this leading power by which all the rest are governed. For the understanding cannot be brought into a truly right state, without governing all the rest. When the rest are not governed, it is for want of due light and power in this. If we are Christians inwardly, then our understandings will be so enlightened, as that all the truths of God, essential for us to know, shall be so clearly discerned, as to exercise their proper influence upon us ; an influence as powerful as their importance demands. Here, I take it, is the great cause of error in those persons who fancy they have already acquired a right knowledge of the truth of God, because they have been instructed in the Christian theory. But I conceive it will be found, on examination, that the evident and great want of influence arises from this, that this branch of the work of inward religion being, to say the least, extremely defective ; and that they view the truths of God only generally, having never sought for light for their understanding from the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. They rest in the knowledge of some general propositions ; and this is perfectly consistent with complete spiritual blindness. They have no spiritual perception of spiritual objects. The eyes of their understanding are not enlightened. In the prayer of Christ for his disciples, we read, “Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth.” The truth of God, when apprehended by the understanding in the light of the Holy Spirit, exerts its own sanctifying influence on the soul. When God shines on his word, and his quickening and enlightening power rests on the understanding, a great inquiry is excited after the truth, so as to cause us to pursue it daily. In this state of the understanding, all the truth it takes hold of falls with weight on our spirit. We are no longer “darkness, but light in the Lord.” The truth of God becomes our delight, and we make it the subject of our continual meditation, and

all under the influence of the Spirit, who is promised to lead us into all truth.

II. We must look for inward religion in the state of the judgment ; that is, to those conclusions to which we come, as to the truths proposed in this book, and apprehended by the understanding.

“And this I pray,” said the apostle, “that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment ; that ye may approve things that are excellent.” that we may come to such conclusions in our judgment respecting the truth which our understanding has admitted, as shall render our knowledge of the truth practical. This is an important part of our subject. What is faith, in fact, intellectually considered, but an expression of our judgments on Divine truth ? I do not know that it is any thing else. What is the faith of credit, but the expression of our judgment on the credibility of that which we believe ? And what is the faith of trust and reliance, entering into the very essence of that particular faith in Christ which justifies, but the expression of our judgment, that the great truths of Christianity are not merely worthy of being believed, but of being admitted into our spirit, and rested and acted upon ? It is here that we find a great difference between those who are only Christians outwardly, and those who are Christians inwardly. The judgment of the former respecting Divine things seldom, if ever, amounts to more than a general belief of their truth. But it never was the design of God, in giving us this revelation, merely to increase the number of opinions on religious subjects. If Christianity is only a sort of religious science, without any reference to practical influence, its importance is far below the means employed to establish it in the earth. I grant, indeed, that if Christianity is to produce faith, faith must be the depository of truth. Its doctrines, its precepts, its promises, its directions and commands, must all be received. But they must be so received, that our whole heart and our whole life must be influenced by them. Now, he who possesses inward religion has been brought to this serious judgment, that he must be converted, or everlastingly perish ; that he must be born again, or he cannot enter the kingdom of God ; that Christ must be received, and his atonement embraced personally ; that he must yield obedience to his laws, or forfeit all the blessings arising from his character as Saviour and intercessor ; that in all things he must be governed by the Divine will ; that he will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or bad ; that, in a word, the book which informs him of all these things is absolutely true, and is given him to be the perfect rule both of his faith and practice. The faith that works by love, and purifies the heart, is always connected with a serious and settled judgment on such points as these. He who leads into all truth enables the believer to rest on the absolute certainty of the truths which the book of God contains. And thus it is that the state of our religion is, to a great extent, regulated by the state of our judgment in Divine things. If this judgment is weak and feeble, there is little effect comparatively produced. If it is strong, and the truth of God form the continual basis of our judgment, there will be a decision of mind which operates as a principle, and rapidly becomes a habit. We feel habitually persuaded that the revelations of this book are not only absolutely true,

but true in respect of ourselves; and upon this persuasion we act. Every man, then, that becomes a Christian inwardly, becomes so by believing all the truths of Christianity; and when he does this, they begin to produce their corresponding effect upon his heart. Let no man say that a man may have such a judgment as this, without being influenced by the truths of which it is persuaded. It is impossible. There is a secret questioning of these great truths, in whole or in part; and this produces all that lukewarmness and sloth which distinguish the character of the man who is only a Christian outwardly.

III. We must look for inward religion in the state of the will.

When this is right it will be clearly manifested in submission and acquiescence. There is submission to the Divine authority. There is a full acknowledgment of this great and humbling principle, to which no man comes but by the grace of God, that we are fully under the government of God; that we belong to Jesus Christ, and have no right to ourselves. When this is fully recognized, then our will submits. And hence arises that right direction of our choice, which may be said both to constitute and mark the rectitude of our will. When we are brought to this state; when this supreme authority of God is, in the full sense of the word, inwardly recognized; every thing that God has fixed as the object of our choice will be accepted by us readily, constantly, and fully. Before we come to this, there may be much hesitation and mental conflict; but when we are Christians inwardly, so fully will this great truth be impressed on our mind, that what God has exhibited to us as the one thing needful is indeed so, that it will be considered by us as the greatest good, and as such heartily chosen by us. And there will be submission, not merely in regard to the moral government and laws of God, but likewise to all the dispensations of his providence. An acquiescence even in the infliction of pain and trouble will mark the rectified will. Inward religion always brings us to imitate Him who said, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." When pains and distresses produce murmuring, our will is in evident opposition to the will of God; and this will often be the case with those who are only Christians outwardly. But it is not so with him who is a Christian inwardly. Nature, indeed, may shrink from painful and mysterious dispensations. The man may be conscious of an inward struggle. He may feel that he comes short of that complete state of rectitude to which his will shall be brought, when, by the blessing of God, Christianity has effected all its purposes in him. But still grace gives him the victory. He is persuaded that the will of God is right, however dark and painful its appointments may at present appear; and therefore he says, "The will of the Lord be done."

IV We are to look for inward Christianity in the state of our principles.

If our principles be right, they are produced by the reception of some of those original, but universal truths revealed in the word of God. These, when properly received, become principles of action and conduct laid up in the heart. All men are men of principle, some way or other. Every man has some principle of action laid up in his heart, from which his conduct receives its direction and character.— Sometimes these principles may be right, sometimes wrong. It is only he who is a Christian inwardly that has a principle capable of univer-

sal reference, and thus of uniform operation. What is the grand principle on which the men of the world act? It is to live to themselves; to consult their own ease, honour, or gratification. The blindness of their understanding conceals from them those true and holy principles which ought to govern their feelings and life. In every man, whatever his moral state may be, principles are found, and found in action. If we are Christians inwardly, new principles are fixed in our heart, and are operating there. Without speaking particularly of all the principles by which the mind of a true Christian is influenced, we may observe that they all resolve themselves into this: "We are not our own; we are bought with a price; we are therefore under an obligation to glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are his." If our hearts are right with God, this principle rules them. And how easy of application it is! What a light it sheds on every object! What a certain guide through every difficulty it furnishes! What a universal rule it affords for the government of all our actions! There is not a situation in which we can be placed, but the application of this principle will mark the line of conduct we are required to choose. Always have respect to this in inquiring as to your state and condition before God. "Am I acting so as to please the Lord Christ? Am I proposing to do that which is consistent with my obligations to Him whose I am, and whom I am bound to serve? Is it my great object to do his will? Is it enough to prevent me from doing any action, that I see it to be inconsistent with his will?" If this great principle entirely governs us, it is impossible for us to be practically wrong. If we trace our practical errors up to their source, we shall find them to have proceeded from at least the temporary admission of some partially unsound principle. Right actions will show that we are under the influence of right principles.

V We must look for inward religion in the state of the feelings.

We are to contend for the important truth that Christianity takes hold of the whole mind, and is intended thoroughly to sanctify the whole man. There are some persons, I know, who deny that feeling forms any essential part of religion. They might as well say, either that man has no feelings, or that there is one faculty of the mind which religion does not control. I have no hesitation in saying, in opposition to such sentiments, that wherever Christianity is, it must produce deep, and strong, and constant emotion. We do not say that these deep emotions are always visibly expressed. We have no higher opinion of those persons who are always giving expression to their religious feelings, than of those who would restrain and hide them in their hearts. Much, however, in this respect, will depend upon circumstances. Wheresoever there is true piety there will be strong feelings. We are naturally capable of such feelings; and the design of religion is not to destroy what is properly natural, but to sanctify it, by giving it a new direction and object. One object of the religion of Christ is to destroy the enmity to God which is deeply rooted in the affections of our nature, and to cleanse away the impurity that cleaves to them; but it cannot do this, if it takes away from us the power of feeling when the great truths of religion are revealed to our understandings. The religion that strangely hardened the heart, and destroyed all feeling in the soul, would be worse than worthless; it would be positively injurious. Look at man as God has made him; and then say, if it

would not be strange if the great things of eternity, as revealed in Scripture, could be set before him, and cordially believed by him, without producing lively and constant emotion. It is very easy for persons, strangers themselves to emotions of this kind, to give them the name of fanaticism. We are under no difficulty in managing a controversy of this kind, if they will only tell us what they mean. It is certain, that whatever danger may be ascribed to religious emotions, the real danger will be found to be, not so much in the emotion itself, as in the opinions and principles by which it is directed. The feelings that arise from right principles and opinions will seldom be wrong.—Where men are properly taught, their emotions will chiefly be awakened by the views they take of God, in his unspotted purity, as well as in his boundless love; and by the sight they have of their own sinfulness, and guilt, and unworthiness; and by the love of a Saviour who gave himself for them to redeem them from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people. And where is the danger of feelings thus awakened? They are all on the side of that which is great and good. Let the attack rather be made on false opinions. Men may believe that they may cherish hatred without sin; and thus may they fall into fanaticism; but let not this be charged on true religion. But the reason of all this opposition to religion is plain. It is the constant endeavour of the mere worldly man to lower the character of religion in order to bring it to the standard of his own experience. Men find it easier to study Christianity as a science, than to bring their feelings to it. If they could repent without sorrow; if they could desire and love God, and have no emotion kindled in their hearts, how easy all this would be! But all this implies contradictions in the very terms that are employed. Repentance implies feeling; the desire of forgiveness implies feeling; love to God implies feeling; joy in the Holy Ghost implies feeling; and all attempts to banish these feelings from religion, prove that religion itself is not understood, and that there is a real, even if it be a secret, wish to lower its character; to make, in fact, a religion, every way compatible with cherished worldliness and sin.

We have no scruple in saying, that if we are Christians inwardly, we shall be the subjects of very powerful emotions. If ever we have truly repented, then have we poured forth

“— those humble, contrite tears,
Which from repentance flow ;”

then has there been in us,—

“That consciousness of guilt which fears
The long-suspended blow.”

If we have believed in Christ, believed in the sense of exclusive trust and dependence, then is it with no ordinary feeling that we sing,—

“Now I have found the ground wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may remain.”

If we have thus believed in Christ, then do we love him, and love him with all the warm affection of a grateful and adoring heart. If we are rightly influenced by religion, it has produced in us deep solemnity and sacred fear. We are aware of the more awful, as well

as the milder perfections of the Divine character. There is veneration as well as love. And there is the holy fear lest at any time we grieve his Spirit; lest we should even seem to come short of the rest which he has promised. And these powerful feelings exist in the heart, instead of those unholy and worldly ones which once dwelt there. We set our hearts on things above, and not on things on the earth. We love our neighbour as ourself, and no longer cherish malice and hatred against him.

Now, if the understanding be thus enlightened, and the judgment thus influenced by it; if the great principle, that we are not our own, but Christ's, govern our minds; if our wills be found thus submitting to the will of God, and acquiescing in his appointments; if our feelings be thus spiritual and heavenly; if it be thus with us, then are we Christians inwardly; then are we in that state in which it is both our duty and privilege to be preserved to the end of our lives.

Suffer me now briefly to address you in improvement of the whole subject.

As an inference from this passage, I would say,

1. That those external things which do not promote this state of mind are, as to us, whatever they may be to others, of no value at all.

So the apostle says, a few verses preceding the text, "For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." No person derives benefit merely from having heard the name of Christ. No man is bettered by being thus acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity. He may have studied them closely; he may even have preached them strenuously; and yet he may be only outwardly a Christian. This is a serious reflection. This doctrine of the difference between a merely outward religion, and one which is enthroned in the heart, and reigns over the whole man, separates the chaff from the wheat; and ought to lead to the inquiry, in what manner we are affected by our external privileges. When we read the word of God, what effect is produced on us? what moral influence exerted on our heart? When we hear the word, is it for improvement? and do we experience that improvement? Are the truths of God more clearly apprehended? Do they give weight and force to the precepts which in theory we acknowledge? Are we receiving the truth that we may be directed and sanctified by it? It is possible for us to hear the word of God regularly, without being at all benefited by it. And if this may be the case for a week, it may be so for a year; for our whole life. Has this been the case with us? Have we heard so much, worshipped so much, engaged in so many religious means and opportunities, and remained to this moment without any true light in our understandings? without having our judgments formed, our principles fixed, our wills decided, our feelings directed to spiritual and Divine things? If we are unrenewed in the spirit of our minds, we may, perhaps, be Christians outwardly, and so have the praise of men; but we have not the favour and approbation of God. It is time for us to engage in most serious examination. Recollect that the day is far spent; that Jesus Christ himself thus addresses us: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." It is the disposition of unconverted man to rest in some undefined notion of mercy and compassion; but no man may encourage

himself in those delightful perfections who is not, at least, penitently seeking forgiveness of sin, and inheritance among them who are sanctified. Look, rather, at the spotless purity of God; at his inexorable justice. Our God is a consuming fire, and he is not mocked. Christ shall purge his floor. The wheat, indeed, he will gather into his garner; but the chaff, though long mixed with it, he will separate from it, and burn with unquenchable fire. Do we believe that this is indeed the word of God? Do we believe that here God speaks to us? To believe the Scriptures so as not to be influenced by them, is as bad as not to believe them at all. O come to a decision as to your state! When the Lord shall judge and condemn you, then shall there be no remedy. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly." Judge yourselves by this great principle.

2. Let me observe, that nothing that has been said is intended to discourage those who find on examination that their understandings and judgments, their will, their principles and feelings, are not yet exactly in the state that has been described to them, if they are penitently and earnestly seeking the inward religion which as yet they have not, but which they most earnestly desire.

I have been describing the character of those who are on the narrow way, and you are only striving to enter in at the strait gate. Be not discouraged. God will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. You have earnest desires for these more perfect attainments; follow on, that you may know the Lord. Rest not in external duties, as if they could satisfy your spirit. If you are not endeavouring to attain to that state of inward religion which has been described, I may not encourage you; but if you are, then hope in God. The bruised reed, I repeat, he will not break; the smoking flax he will not quench. He has shown you what you want; seek him with all your heart, and he shall bestow it on you.

3. Lastly, when we thus bring our character and experience to the test of God's holy word, there is an impression which may almost naturally be made on our mind.

We may think these requisitions of almighty God to be somewhat severe and rigorous. But let us correct ourselves. He does, indeed, require all this of us; but he requires it of us, not only as he is our Judge, but as he is our Saviour. Inward Christianity is our privilege as well as our duty. It implies unnumbered blessings. It includes love, and joy, and peace, and hope. Possessing it, we shall walk with God; and he will vouchsafe to us such a continual apprehension of his gracious presence, that we shall be enabled calmly to trust in his protection, and rejoice in his love. They who were Jews outwardly, in the prophet's days, complained that they had no profit in serving God, and walking mournfully before the Lord of hosts. God was far from them; for the heart of these formalists was far from him. But if we have religion inwardly, our praise is not of man, but of God; and, like Enoch, walking with God, we shall have the testimony that we please him. Our intercourse with God, maintained by the exercises of devotion, and uninterrupted by the duties and cares of life, will be to us a perpetual source of hallowed enjoyment; and that enjoyment shall be preparatory to the more elevated happiness of heaven.

SERMON CIX.—*Presumption reprov'd.*

“Should it be according to thy mind?” Job xxxiv, 33.

THIS was a very proper question to be put to Job, whose danger was, to challenge and arraign the ways of God. But the principle reprov'd in him is largely diffused among men. Monstrous as the fact is, man often judges his Maker; and when he does not do this openly, he forms his own theory of prosperity, of utility, of mercy, and justice, to which he would, if he were able, bring God's dispensations, or under the influence of which he interprets those dispensations in opposition to the will of God. This principle we may probably, in many cases, detect in ourselves; and as it can never exist without producing effects, always dangerous, and sometimes fatal, it will be proper to direct your attention to it. I shall therefore bring before you some of those particular instances in which it manifests itself; and you yourselves will make the application, so as to ascertain in what degree, or in what respect, you may have indulged it.

Our proneness to oppose our judgments to the Divine determinations sometimes appears,

I. With respect to the extent of the Divine law

We allow his right to govern; that all acts of flagrant viciousness, all passions of dangerous tendency, ought to be controlled: but the perfection of the Divine rule lies far beyond this. God claims to govern the opinions of men; to regulate the will, by a wise adjustment of its degrees of choice to the degrees of moral goodness. He claims a superior and vital love; to occupy the thoughts; to be referred to in all doubtful cases; to be at once the rule and end of life. Men wish for greater liberty; and to a religion which exercises a more general and undefined control, they find it hard and impossible to bring themselves to submit. But should so serious and grave a matter be “according to thy mind?” Hast thou any right to judge how far the Creator shall claim power over a creature, who is bound to entire submission, having no right to live but for its Maker's will? Hast thou forgotten that thou art not thine own, for a higher reason,—that thou art “bought with a price?” that every thing is purchased? And dost thou forget that the law is “good,” as well as “holy?” What, then, are all thy wrestlings with its restraints and commands, but the feelings of a petulant child against the good discipline of a parent, which is all from love? And dost thou not know the important truth, that whenever the law of God appears too restraining, there is a fault in thy nature; a love of license, a deadness to God? Shall it be “according to thy mind?” To what would corrupt men come, considering the variety of their propensities, each of which they would take from under the cognizance of authority, reduce the Divine law to a thing of nought, and leave the world lawless, and every evil of the heart without restraint? It cannot be “according to thy mind.” But, happily, it is according to the mind of God; of Him who knows that one loose and unrestrained principle would vitiate the whole, plunge his creature into misery, and rob him of the glory of making that creature happy for ever, through the strength of principle, the purity of affection, and the entireness of an obedience, flowing at once from holiness and love.

II. This principle sometimes manifests itself with reference to religion as a matter of experience.

There are admissions on this subject. Religion, the religion of Christ, is worthy of the acceptance of all. Its truths are to be received; its precepts to be obeyed; its simple, but impressive, ordinances to be attended; its message of mercy to be received with thankfulness; and its revelations of a future life to be occasionally meditated upon, in order to remind us of their value and importance. But beyond these truths, admitted and understood in a very general manner, how little is suffered to enter into the theory of religion, as a matter which affects the conscience and the heart! To the obvious doctrine of Scripture, as bearing upon the experience of the truly devout in all ages, the theory of many minds stands greatly opposed. The assurances and consolations of the pious are referred to a weak and enthusiastic subjection to feelings and imaginative excitements, at which the reason of these theorists spurns, and refers the fears and conflicts of the inward and spiritual life to a gloom at which their gayety shudders.

But what, if it were "according to thy mind?" What, then, would be the system of experimental piety set before us? You would have no "strong consolations;" then, you would never have fled to the refuge; never have felt your danger; never experienced the transporting sense of safety. You would have had no high assurances then; your religion would not allow of your calling God your Father; nor would the language of an apostle be suited to you, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Then you would have had no conscious approaches to God in prayer; you would not then have drawn "nigh to God" in reality; nor have proved the truth of the corresponding promise, "I will draw nigh to you." And then, with regard to conflicts and fears, the true reason of your unacquaintance with them is, that the enemy keeps his goods in peace; and that there can be no conflict with worldliness and corruption, if there be no resistance to them. O vain attempt to reduce the spirit to the letter; to convert a religion which is the work of God, his "mighty working" in man, from the first to the last, into an external thing, which shall never rouse a fear, nor quicken an affection, nor bring man consciously to God, nor urge him to a courageous conflict, to subdue himself and the enemies which once had the despotic sway over him! But it is not "according to thy mind," O man of opinions, of stately forms, and of that affected sobriety which, through fear of excess, thou hast never even tasted. The work of God in man is quickening, renewing, sanctifying; it is a war with nature, a conquest of nature, an upholding of man in a race, in a fight, in a perilous and varied journey; and to watch, to pray, to struggle, to fear, to believe, and to love, are the emotions and the acts which it calls into constant and intense exercise, in order to our peace here, and to our final and immortal victory.

III. This principle frequently exhibits itself in questions which relate to the method of our pardon, as sinners.

That beings who have so greatly offended should ever stand upon being pardoned in a way prescribed by themselves to their greatly-offended God, though a strange fact, is yet established. And here man claims, proudly and petulantly claims, that it shall be according to

his mind. The great established principle from the beginning has been, that sin should be forgiven among men through the trust of a penitent spirit in the vicarious sacrifice and infinite merits of the incarnate Son of God, either promised, or already consummated. But it is easy to show that, by a strange and inveterate propensity, men have, in all ages, converted the very institution of faith into a plea of merit. The ancient sacrifices, which represented the total demerit of man, and the meritorious interposition of another on his behalf, came to be considered as offerings, the number and value of which represented the piety and zeal of the offerer. The Jewish typical system was elaborately evangelical; yet, while the Jews still offered sacrifice, the symbol of human worthlessness, they sought justification by the works of the law, among which their sacrifices were reckoned as works of obedience; and hence they presented offerings of pride before the altars of expiation. The same perversion descended into Christianity. Repentance was considered meritorious; "works meet for repentance" were regarded as a kind of atonement; the very act of receiving the memorials of the Christian sacrifice itself was trusted in as a reason why pardon should be conceded; and the whole compass of obedience was thought to go along with the merits of Christ, in order, with that, to make up for our offences. So hard is it for man to "submit to the righteousness of God;" so reluctant is he to confess his full demerit, and to be saved by an act of grace and pure mercy, as a sinner. Even when better views are admitted, this self-confiding feeling suggests itself, under a language of humility and faith. We often still secretly regard our very humility and faith as having some worthiness; or we hope to heighten both, in order that we may be qualified to claim what Christ has already, by his death, empowered mercy to bestow as a free gift; and, for want of an entire self-renunciation, we remain in bondage still. But shall it be then according to thy mind? Is it for a sinful man to prescribe the terms of pardon? Is it for thee, all helplessness and pollution, to fancy thou canst feel, or think, or do any thing, which can balance thine enormous offences? If so, it was not necessary that Christ should die; and if his sacrifice is sufficient, in vain dost thou think to add to its merit. Were that possible, it would be unnecessary. Were the ransom too small, thou couldst not make up the mighty sum. But it is paid; and all that is required of thee is, that, with penitence, thou shouldest rest upon it as thy only hope. The mind of God has designed the wondrous plan. Wisdom and power both unite here; and if thou reason not, but believe; if thou accept, and cease to judge, its wisdom and its power shall together be revealed in thy lightened conscience, and thy accepted person.

IV This principle is illustrated in another, but not un instructive manner, by that tendency there is in us to wrestle with the appointments of God in the choice of our lot and portion in life.

Here, indeed, we not unfrequently think that it ought to be according to our mind; and we as often find ourselves very painfully crossed in our endeavours to make it so. If this produce submission to the mysterious power which controls and sports with our purposes, well; if not, we place ourselves within the reach of the most grievous temptations. We would have it according to our mind. How often the contrary occurs! We sketch our course through life. We avoid this,

and bend to that. We doubt not that we are infallible judges in the case, and choose that which is best, and most fitting. So, when we go along the road, we scarcely meet with an object which we have not seen in false proportions in the perspective; or we meet with many which we never took into the account; and our road, so easy, becomes perplexed; and we are carried into quite different directions. We toil; we succeed. We see the fruit of our exertions rise about us. We rejoice in the work of our hands; but we forget that the house is built upon sand; and the rains descend, and the floods rise, and the winds blow, and it falls, leaving us only the ruin, and the reproach of our confidence. We are surrounded with friends and relations. We feel that our interests are identified with their continuance with us; and our hope anticipates the renewed and continued felicity we now enjoy. How often is the dependent shrub rent from the supporting tree which it beautified, and beneath which it was sheltered; or the tree itself, smitten by premature decay, crumbles down amidst the plants it protected by its shadow, and leaves them exposed to every wind of heaven! We are in health and vigour; and every interest often seems to depend upon the continuance of health. In that moment the hand of God falls upon us; chastens man for his sin; and makes his "beauty to consume away, like a moth fretting a garment." Why need we proceed? If life be charged with changes and sorrows, it is every moment thwarting the mind, the purpose, the wishes, of millions of human beings. But powerfully as feeling may here lead us to wish that it should be according to our mind; yet there are several important reasons why that feeling, natural as it is, should be checked, and we should learn in all things to say, "Thy will be done."

Remember, then, that the penalty of sin lies on man; and if this be punishment, it is not extreme. That may shut out murmuring. Remember that a man at ease in his enjoyments should not seek a higher good. You would keep the potion which lulls you to worldly sleep. God removes it, and rouses you to exertion by thorns and briers.

Remember that thou wouldest not have known what is in thine heart but for these trials, which bring its true character to light. Without these trials, virtue would have no exercises, and no improvement; and the rich experience of the care, help, and ready watchfulness of God would all be wanting. In ordinary cases we are apt to lose sight of God in our attention to second causes. In the swift turns and the strange results of a chequered life his hand is more visible. O let it be thy care to make and keep God thy friend! Then his "mind" toward thee will be always good.

V This principle is apt to show itself, even in good men, in what we may call the circumstances of their experience.

Let me illustrate this.

It may be "according to thy mind" to pass into spiritual life without deep sorrow for sin; but it may be the "mind" of God, by exquisite distress to lay open the plague of thy heart, and to lay the foundation of personal piety deep in previous mental anguish.

It may be "thy mind," to prescribe great and deep discipline of repentance; it may be his, to prevent Pharisaism, by saving thee more speedily and directly by faith.

It may be "thy mind" to obtain prompt victories over temptations,

and the evils of a corrupt nature ; it may be his, that thou shouldest have severe and protracted struggles ere the conquest is won.

It may be "thy mind" to have rich and uninterrupted spiritual joys ; but it may be his, to throw thee more upon principle and personal effort.

It may be "thy mind" to be much employed by God, in extending the interests of religion both at home and abroad, but it may be his, that thy days should be in a great measure spent in retirement and solitude.

It may be "thy mind" to be saved from surrounding evils by hope ; it may be his, thus to save thee by fear.

It may be "thy mind" to glorify God by public and active zeal ; it may be his, to place thee in affliction and silence, to glorify him by the passive graces of the Christian character.

Or, the reverse of all this may be his mind.

The question still is, "Should it be according to thy mind?" that is, the mind of an erring and fallible creature, or the mind of God that cannot err? The answer to this question your own hearts will give. It becomes not a fallen creature, who deserves nothing but hell, to dictate to the all-wise God.

The conclusion of the whole is,

1. To take religion as it is described in the Scriptures, honestly and prayerfully interpreted. God hath spoken, and we are meekly to receive the law from his mouth.

2. To take our providential lot, and extract good from it, let it be what it may. "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

3. To leave the process of our recovery from sin to holiness in the hands of God, only seeking that recovery. In all things let us aim at this, and leave the manner of its accomplishment to our gracious Saviour.

SERMON CX.—*The Trial of Faith.*

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter i, 7.

FAITH, in its general sense, and considered only as the work of the intellect, is the persuasion that certain propositions are true ; and Christian faith is, in this respect, a firm persuasion of the truth of Christian doctrine. But though this is the basis of that faith of which such excellent things are spoken, yet it is not that faith itself. It is possible for us thus to believe to the end of our life, and yet to die under the frown of God, and be miserable for ever. That faith, therefore, whereof cometh salvation, must be much more than a mere act of the intellect : in point of fact, it is a work of the heart ; for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ;" and Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" be baptized. True faith, then, is a personal trust in the atonement of Christ, and in the promises

of God, as they are yea and amen in him ; and if this faith is not added to our general belief in the truth of Christianity, the fault is in our own hearts ; we do not desire it, we do not pray for it, we make no effort thus to take hold of the strength of God, that we may be at peace with him.

Now, as the very existence of saving faith is derived from the work of God in the heart, its increase and growth must very much depend on the usual state and temper of our hearts ; otherwise it is not very conceivable how there could be—to use the language of the text—any trial of our faith. If it were only a persuasion of the truth of certain propositions, it could only be tried by opposing arguments : that which is purely intellectual can only be affected by what is itself intellectual. This is not, indeed, excluded ; but still faith has other trials. The epistle is directed to them who were under persecutions ; and St. Peter now speaks particularly of that trial to which their faith would be thus exposed. Now, how should outward afflictions try our faith, if it were no more than the assent of the mind to certain opinions ? What effect could imprisonment for Christ's sake have upon it ? If the heart had nothing to do with faith, by what operation could a prison produce an entire change in his belief ? How could the frown of a persecutor effect a complete change in the judgment ? And yet such things have occurred ; and they show us how much the heart has to do with faith. And thus, whatever may affect the heart, may affect our faith ; whatever oppresses it with care, whatever produces murmuring and rebellion against God, whatever entangles its affections, will necessarily weaken our faith, and, if not checked, ultimately destroy it. Impatience, fear, and cowardice, may alienate the heart from the service of Christ ; and then all trust in him departs ; and thus, by making shipwreck of a good conscience, we may likewise make shipwreck of faith. Men may court the error with which the ideas of preservation or worldly advancement are connected ; and having thus perverted their judgment, that intellectual faith may be lost, which, but for the darkening influence of sin, might still have been retained, even though the trust and confidence with which it was before connected exist no longer.

The words of the text, as they respect this great principle, to which so much importance is attached in Holy Scripture, may form the subject of profitable meditation. They direct our attention to three points.

I. The value of faith : “ Being much more precious than of gold that perisheth.”

II. The trials of faith : so severe that the apostle says, “ Though it be tried with fire.” And,

III. The future honours which God reserves for the faith of his people. That it “ might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

And frequently as these subjects may be brought before us, they can never be seriously referred to without profit.

I. The value of faith.

It is valuable above that to which men are accustomed to attach the greatest value : “ More precious than gold that perisheth.” The mode of expression leads to the conclusion, that the apostle considered it as valuable above all earthly things. We may illustrate this by a few particular considerations.

1. Even considered intellectually, as a mere belief of revealed truth, faith is of the highest possible value, as the great instrument by which we obtain religious knowledge and wisdom.

There is no way to heavenly wisdom but by faith; for if we have not this, if we receive not the word of God, then must we necessarily be left, in all religious and moral matters, to the strength of our own reason; and that that strength, on such subjects, is perfect weakness, the experience of the world confirms. The world, even by its wisdom, knew not God, knew not man, knew no method of salvation, knew nothing of a glorious immortality beyond the grave; whereas the simplest and most unlettered believer, receiving this sacred word, becomes possessed of the very mind of God. Here is a book which contains God's judgments, God's decisions, God's revelations, on subjects of the utmost importance. The whole scene enters his mind: God, his law, and his redeeming purposes; the distinctions of right and wrong, the beauties of an attainable holiness, the sublime realities of a future and eternal state, are all presented to him, and he becomes "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." In this respect, who can tell the value of faith?

2. But its value—as it is not merely an intellectual exercise, but an act of trust, and thus a work of the heart—is shown by this, that it connects us immediately and personally with the merits of the great atonement.

That atonement was provided, independently of us, by the love and wisdom of God; it was offered, independently of us, by the love and patience of our Lord Jesus; and its general efficacy consists in this, that it opens a way for the forgiveness and salvation of guilty man. God can now be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. But, brethren, glorious as is this arrangement, men are not necessarily put into the actual possession of the benefits of reconciliation; they are yet dead in trespasses and sins, aliens, strangers, living without God, and without hope, and in a state of condemnation; the wrath of God abideth on them. What, then, is it which immediately connects man with the merit of the atonement? God is revealed to us as gracious and merciful, as pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin; but still the sins of individual man are not by this forgiven; he is still under wrath, and not reconciled to God. Where, then, is the connecting link? What transfers to him, so to speak, the merit of his Saviour's death? It is faith. Pierced by a deep conviction of sin, a full and humbling acknowledgment of his own guilt and helplessness, it is this act of personal trust which connects him with the great and availing sacrifice. Just as when the ancient offerer brought his lamb for a burnt-offering, he laid his hands on the head of the victim, and confessed his sins over it, and thus connected himself personally with the act of offering; so it is that a true faith has respect to the atonement of Christ, and consists in trust, in the exercise of a personal, exclusive dependence upon it; and then, yes, then, the full efficacy of that sacrifice extends to us; then it is that man is reconciled to God, and is at peace with him; then he is put into the family of God, and acknowledged as a son. Considered in this point of view, who can estimate the value of faith?

3. The value of faith is seen, thirdly, in this, that it not only con-

nects man, as guilty, with the meritorious atonement of the Saviour, but man, as weak and helpless, with the omnipotence of Divine grace.

True faith necessarily includes trust, trust in another; and this supposes our own insufficiency. If it were not thus with us, why should we be called to rely on foreign aid? The moral insufficiency of man is one great reason of faith. It is in proportion as we feel our own helplessness that we hold the object of our trust with a firmer grasp. And what is the sufficiency of man as to that which is good? How true will it be found, on an examination of the facts of the case, that, without Christ, we can do nothing! What is the true condition of human nature? Why, "In me," says the apostle, "that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." No man, of himself, can order his thoughts aright, nor influence his own will aright, nor regulate his own affections rightly, nor speak nor do that which is pleasing to God, nor suffer the afflictions of life in the spirit in which they ought to be suffered. And he who feels this, he who feels that in point of fact there is no course of holy thinking and acting for which he is sufficient as of himself; that of himself, he cannot even pray aright, and that he is utterly incapable of any thing which is substantially good without the special aid of God; he who enters most deeply into this will feel most sensibly the value of this great principle of faith: for what is its operation? It connects, as I have said before, the weakness of man with the omnipotence of God; he is now ready for all to which he may be called; there is nothing, however high, however difficult, however holy, however impossible to man, considered as man, and, as such, left to himself,—there is nothing, in this respect, but what is possible to him that believeth. And why? "I can do all things," said St. Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." This is that principle by which, indeed, we take hold of God himself. That beautiful expression in the Old Testament exactly suggests the idea: "Let him take hold of my strength." It is this by which we can now successfully attempt to order our thoughts, to speak, and to act aright, to pray, to hear, to meet our various temptations, to sustain our various trials; by faith we are made strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; and who, even in this respect, can estimate its value?

4. Another proof of the value of faith is found in that wonderful property which the Apostle Paul assigns to it, and which, indeed, we find, by actual experience, that it possesses; the property of fixing its eye on invisible and eternal realities, and keeping the soul continually under their influence.

David knew that when he said, "I have set the Lord always before me." Moses felt it when "he endured, as seeing Him that is invisible." Every Christian feels it, because a true faith necessarily pierces through the gloom of the future, and fixes itself on the bright realities of another world; hence says the apostle, it is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen:" a demonstration of those unseen things which gives them, as it were, an actual subsistence as to ourselves, keeps them present to the mind, and the mind under their influence. Under this influence we not only believe in them as existing and enduring, but they become admonitory to us. We now "fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." Our object will now be con-

tinually before us throughout our life; the very same which gave a moral elevation, so noble and impressive, to the character of the patriarchs, who chose rather to dwell in movable tents than in those cities which would have given them a more permanent habitation; and they did this, we are taught, because they felt "they were strangers and pilgrims on earth," and that they desired "a better, that is, a heavenly country;" "for," says the apostle, "they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." And that is the character of every true Christian; he speaks plainly, and tells you that he is seeking "a city which hath foundations;" it is to this that he tends; the great object of his life is this, that he may reach the glorious city of God, and be one of its inhabitants for ever. And thus, too, will faith so present to us these unseen realities of the future, as to quicken our own efforts: as the apostle speaks, in reference to this very subject, we shall "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," and we shall "run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Looking to him with a steady faith, who is the great bestower of the prize of eternal life, our pursuit is quickened, we cast aside all impediments, and move along the appointed path with active and endearing perseverance; and thus do we anticipate the rest and joy of actual possession. Already have we the foretastes of the love, the purity, the Divine communion of heaven itself, and we have the "desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

In all this we see the power of this great principle making man familiar with these high, and glorious, and eternal subjects, and forming his character accordingly. And what a contrast to this character is presented by the base sensualist, the contemptible profligate, living under the sole influence of earthly things, and never rising above the dust and stir of this lower state; who still retains all his worldly character, and is, within, earthly, sensual, and devilish, and sometimes an awful compound of them all! Nor is the contrast less striking between the character of the man who possesses faith, in all its realizing influence, and that of the cold-hearted, frozen formalist, who goes the round of his religious observances without animation, without delight, and without acceptance; who turns occasionally from the world that he loves, to the religion that is a weariness to him; and hastens back, complaining that he finds no profit in serving God, and walking mournfully before the Lord of hosts.

These illustrations will show us something of the meaning of the strong expression, that faith is much "more precious than gold that perisheth;" than all the wealth of the world; than any earthly object that can possibly be conceived by us. The faith which receives the truth of God, and teaches us the lessons of Divine and heavenly wisdom; which, by connecting us with the great atonement, brings us into personal reconciliation with God, and obtains the promises of the Divine mercy; which connects the weakness and insufficiency of man with the omnipotence and fulness of God; which makes us familiar with the great subjects of another life, and places us under the influence of prospects and hopes both admonitory and sanctifying;—how valuable must such a faith be! No wonder that St. Peter calls it, in his other epistle, "precious faith."

Let us, if we see that it is thus precious, say with the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith."

II. We come now to consider the trials to which this great principle is exposed.

The apostle speaks of the trial of faith, of its being tried as with fire. Whatever good is given to man is always exposed to trial: this seems to be one great law of our present state, and we cannot escape from it; nor would it, indeed, be to our interest to escape from it. If we are faithful, the grace that is tried is both strengthened and purified by the trial. Let us never forget this Divine appointment. Every good thing which God plants in man is like the seed which is sown in the earth, and is exposed to danger in every stage of its growth, so that it can never be considered as absolutely safe till it is gathered into the garner. Thus it is with all our graces: each has its peculiar trial and danger; but faith being a leading grace, is subjected to the greatest and most severe trials. Our spiritual enemy well knows that if this fail we are at once overcome; and therefore Christ said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He speaks, you will see, of faith only; importing that if his faith failed not, nothing else would fail, his faith would support and preserve all the rest: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Let us briefly consider some of the trials to which our faith is exposed.

1. In its lower sense, merely considered as belief of the truth, faith will be tried.

This may occur in many circumstances, and especially from infidel sophistry. Attempts are often made to shake and subvert the very foundations of belief; and, for this purpose, many a plausible argument has been invented, which, even to a true Christian not well accustomed to disentangle truth from error, when error and truth are interwoven by the art of man, may seem very perplexing; and, unless he recur very carefully to first principles, he is liable to get out of his depth, and to be carried away by the force of the stream. Let it be observed that many of the great truths of our religion are, in their own nature, so high, so deep, so broad, that they lie very far beyond the entire comprehension of man; their whole extent is necessarily, from the limited capacity of finite natures, placed beyond the comprehension of man, and even of angels. Clearly, therefore, as they are announced to us as facts and doctrines; clear as the light is in which they are placed; yet is the circle, though strongly illuminated, but a contracted one, and, beyond its limits, all is darkness. Almighty God has so ordered his revelation as to give us many facts that we must receive on his own authority; facts without their reasons; declaring to us that many things are, without showing us how or why they are. The whole system of Divine revelation is so constructed as to put man to the test; so constructed as to give to every man the most powerful reasons for belief, and yet so constructed, too, that they who will love error may find very plausible reasons for embracing it. From this original construction of the revelation itself, there is no man but may discover, if in his heart he wishes to do so, very strong reasons for deceiving himself. When his deceived heart has turned him on one side, the very lie he holds in his right hand may present to him the appearance of truth.

If he love sin, and not truth, and holiness, and God, it will be no difficult matter for him, in many respects, to persuade himself that he is right when he is wrong. That is a trial to which every man is put. We may wish that the case had been different, and that all things proposed to our faith had been made so clear as that we could not possibly have mistaken them; but the wisdom of God has not chosen that it should be so. Man's submission to God is to be tested here, as well as elsewhere; he is to learn to be contented with, "Thus saith the Lord," and with the plain evidence that the Lord hath said it; and this, though it should satisfy the highest and strongest reason of man, will never satisfy the cravings of a vain curiosity, nor meet the demands of that proud intellect which refuses to sit at the feet of Jesus to hear his word.

Now, in opposing those plausibilities which may be urged against Christian belief, our faith will either stand the trial, or it will not. If we abide not the trial, what do we gain? Truth of a more important kind, and better attested? A better system, less liable to uncertainty and doubt? Nay, brethren, we escape no difficulties; the difficulties are greater, and, if we allow ourselves to think at all, the uncertainty is more perplexing; we soon fall into universal doubt, and are tossed on its waves in gloomy uncertainty as to every thing, and especially as to the future. But what will be the result if his faith bear the trial; if, instead of giving up what is clear and important,—attested by the word of God, and by the evidence of prophecy, miracles, and its own internal characters of holiness, and wisdom, and love,—because he cannot explain all mysteries, and answer all doubts, he remembers that such a state of things is well accommodated to his present condition, and that it is written, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter?" His faith shall become stronger; he will feel increasing satisfaction in resting on the book; he stands on the rock; all may be fluctuation and storm around him, but he is steadfast and unmovable; he possesses the docility of a child; delights to learn the lessons which his heavenly Father teaches; and, while he leaves all difficulties to be explained in the light of a future state, when he shall no longer see through a glass darkly, he becomes increasingly wise unto salvation, and finds greater facility and pleasure in the practical application of the truths which he believes, to all the purposes of a holy life.

2. But our faith will not only be tried by sophistry; it will be tried also by what may be termed practical unbelief.

This is especially the case in all temptations to sin. We find, from the sacred history, in what way sin first entered the world. There was a wily tempter; and the first temptation was to unbelief. There were two things which he attempted to effect, and which, unhappily, he did effect. The first was, to hide from the mind the truth of God. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? Ye shall not surely die." Hath God indeed said these things? Is the command true? Is the threatening true? And then, to turn the attention from what God had said, to the fair fruit, that by its fairness the imagination might be inflamed, and the judgment perverted. A true faith, brethren, has as much dependence on the threatenings of God as on his promises. It will always mentally connect punishment with sin, and thus preserve the mind in a sacred awe, and a fear of offend-

ing God. You may well suspect the reality of your faith if you are disposed to trust in God's promises only, and not in his threatenings. It is the character of a self deceiver in religion to come and trust in all that is mild, and merciful, and gracious; and yet to feel great difficulty in believing this, that God is equally sincere in his threatenings and judgments. On the other hand, it is the character of a mind truly humbled and penitent, to find it more difficult to credit the merciful promises of God, than his awful, yet righteous threatenings. The true believer knows how to unite both. If man, then, was at first tried in this way; and if the trial was successful, even in the strength and glory of his nature; are we, in its weakness, less likely to be overcome? The temptation will triumph, unless we cry, "Lord, increase our faith;" unless we still hold fast by this great principle, that what God has said on any subject is never to be appealed from, never even questioned. Now, if our faith stand not this trial; if we lose sight of the truth and faithfulness of God; and get under the influence of passion and sense, what is the consequence? Why, we sin; we come under condemnation, under the wrath of God; we expose ourselves to danger; we get into the path of the destroyer; we place ourselves in the circumstances of many others who have wandered out of the way of understanding, and now "remain in the congregation of the dead." But if our faith successfully resist this trial, then shall we conquer through our conquering Lord, and, like him, go on conquering and to conquer. In many respects his temptation in the wilderness affords us an instructive and animating example; but, in one respect, eminently so. What was the sword he wielded? The word of God. What the spirit in which he produced that word in opposition to all the temptations of Satan? "It is written." God hath said it. It is a thing not to be contested. "It is written." Thus it was that the subtle tempter was foiled, and obliged to flee. Our only hope of success is in a firm persuasion of the truth of God, whether in his promises or threatenings; a full conviction, especially, of the certain connection that exists between sin and misery, and eternal ruin.

3. Faith, in that higher sense in which the word is used, as implying a simple trust in the atonement of the Saviour, will be tried by our proneness to self dependence.

There is in every man so great a proneness to depend on himself, that he thinks he can offer something to God as a reason, if not exactly for the success of his prayers, and the communication of the blessings he desires, yet still as a something on account of which God will esteem him the more, and be the more ready to bless him. He, therefore, searches into himself in order to discover some excellence or other that may encourage him to the exercise of a stronger faith in God than he thinks he would be warranted to maintain under other circumstances. That keeps many an humbled spirit from the joys of God's salvation. Something in ourselves is supposed to be necessary in order to embolden us to rest on the merit of the Saviour; and we dare not trust in him, because we fear we have it not. We are justified by faith in Christ; and we derive all life, all blessing, in the same way from first to last. Our language must always be,

"Jesus, thou great eternal mean,
I look for all from thee."

Throughout the whole experience of a Christian, in all the simplicity of faith, he must rely only on the merit of the great atonement, and claim its mighty influence and prevalence with God, and all things only through that, independently of every other consideration. But here is the trial of our faith. We often hesitate to believe, because we see no goodness in ourselves. The recollection of unfaithfulness prevents us from coming to the fountain, where alone we can find healing for our backslidings. Often do we expect from means and ordinances, and our own efforts put forth in various ways, the grace which, if it comes to us at all, must come to us direct from the Saviour; and which all means can only convey as the appointed instruments. We are still prone to trust to an arm of flesh; and in this proneness faith often finds one of its severest trials. And if our faith fail in this, we sink into a state which is, in fact, only another form of self righteousness; a state in which, however inadvertently, the value of the perfect atonement is lessened to us; we lose our evidence of the Divine mercy; we withdraw from the fountain of light; and falling back as on our own resources, we receive neither life, nor strength, nor holiness; we become even as other men. I know that this glorious doctrine of entire and exclusive trust in Christ may be abused. I know that it is abused by us whenever we expect from him nothing but pardon. We trust in Christ in order to obtain, not merely the safety and comfort of pardon, but all that living power and holiness by which we are conformed to his image and will. Still, though careless men may abuse it, the whole of God's scheme must be taught you, even that it is your business, in honour of the great atoning sacrifice which ever prevails with God, to have an entire, individual, continual trust in your Saviour. And if, notwithstanding all temptations to the contrary, you keep him ever in your view; if your faith bears the trial, and rejects all solicitations to rest on other grounds; then shall your confidence become stronger, and continually shall you be able to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." The life which you live in the flesh shall be by the faith of the Son of God, and all the benefits of the life of faith shall be your own.

4. Faith is also tried by afflictions and sorrows.

And this the apostle here especially refers to. Let us see what is the proper office of faith in affliction. In sorrows, however painful, in difficulties, however intricate, our faith has to repose entirely on the great doctrine, that all that concerns us is in the hands of God; that here there is no chance, no oversight, no delegation of the Divine power to the creature. And yet, how often does it appear as though our way were hid from the Lord, and our judgment passed over from our God! How often does all appear confused, as though governed by chance! And how often does the creature seem to have the power over all that concerns us; and looking upward, and only seeing the dark and heavy clouds, we are ready to say, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!" And thus is our faith tried. Thus, too, it is the work of faith to rest satisfied that there is a real necessity for all these exercises; that the chastening rod is in the hand of our heavenly Father, who wields it, not for his pleasure, but for our profit. So says the apostle, in words connected with the text: "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness

through manifold temptations." This is a necessity arising out of that course of discipline under which God is pleased to place us, that we may be cured of some evil, or brought to the more vigorous and habitual exercise of some good; and yet self love comes in very frequently, and, overlooking the fault that requires correction, doubts whether the discipline is so necessary, or that it need be so painful, or that its painfulness need be so long continued. And in this way, too, is our faith tried. Then, again, it is the office of faith in affliction to be fully persuaded, not only that these things are necessary, but that they are directed by infinite wisdom. There are moments when we are ready to form plans of our own, and to fancy that these would be better ordered than that scheme of discipline to which we are subjected, and of which we may be tempted to say, "All these things are against me." And this is a trial of our faith. And then, what is still more difficult in the exercise of faith, we have to rest fully persuaded, not only that all is most wisely ordered, but that all is the result of the great loving kindness, the special condescension, of God to man. "What is man, that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" What, indeed, is man, that God should thus magnify him? Brethren, the true reason of affliction, as to all men in this life, more or less, is love; love, even when there is anger mixed with it. If they are not in the covenant of God; if they are going astray, there is a merciful end in their afflictions, even to reclaim them, that they may keep the law of the Lord. But this is especially the case as to them that love God. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to them that keep his covenant and his testimonies." And our faith is firmly to rest on this, that "whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." And thus, in all our afflictions and sorrows, do special trials come to our faith. It is tried by our natural impatience, by our self love, and by our want of power to pierce through the clouds and darkness that may be about the heavenly throne. Now, our faith either bears this trial, or it does not. If it does not, what do we gain? The potsherd of the earth strives with its Maker; man contends with God, and puts himself in array against the Almighty. Murmuring, rebellion, and all the various evils of an earthly mind, are excited. The trials which were designed to correct evil become the occasion of stirring up other and greater; and those afflictions which were designed for life issue in death. On the other hand, if our faith sustain the trial unhurt, the great ends of these providential dispensations will be accomplished; there will be increase of patience, increase of knowledge, more established communion with God, more numerous opportunities of knowing how God interposes on our behalf, for our comfort, and support, and protection. And even if these mysterious plans are not unfolded to us in this life, yet shall we feel that we are the better for them, grievous as they may be, and that they yield to us the peaceable fruits of righteousness; and if faith hold fast by the great principles which it has embraced, in another world God will be his own interpreter, and make all plain to us.

III. Lastly, let us consider the final honours of faith. It shall "be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

There is, doubtless, a reference in these words to the obloquy that

is cast on the faith of Christians by the men of this world. It was so in the days of the apostle, and it is so to this day. Men can well understand what faith is, in the sense of mere belief of certain truths; but as to that which is the effort and motion of the soul toward God, that which connects man with God, and derives life and strength from him through the great atonement, it is neither appreciated nor understood; and those who speak of it are the objects of the ridicule of the wit, the contempt of the infidel, and the scorn of the wicked. Yet shall this despised and contemned faith be found at last to praise, and honour, and glory. It has, indeed, its honours now, far greater than any of which unbelief can boast. Is it not that which awakens a soul asleep in sin, to serious thoughts of God and eternity? Is it not that which brings man to God? man, through his Saviour's satisfaction, to the footstool of God for the blessings of reconciliation and adoption? Is it not that which brings with it the mighty influence of that Holy Spirit which works in man the death unto sin, and the new life unto righteousness? Is it not that which is the source of our spiritual victories? which gives us strength to do, and strength to suffer? Is it not that which enables us to resist the temptations with which the present world continually surrounds us? For "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And is it not that which extracts the sting of death, fixes the eye beyond the tomb, and connects even the grave with the trophies of that most glorious victory which the Saviour shall achieve, when he shall change the vile bodies of his saints, and fashion them that they may be like his own glorious body? Such are the honours of faith here on earth. Where shall we look for those of formality and unbelief?

But the apostle refers to its future honours; to the praise and glory in which our faith shall issue at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then shall the faith which has received the mysteries of God be honoured. Take an instance of this: that great "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," a true faith always held, in opposition to all sophistry. That Lord shall come and declare himself. And will he declare himself to be man or God? Will he justify the faith of his people, or refute it? He shall come; and in his time he shall show who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

"Yes, we shall see that day supreme,
When none his Godhead shall deny,
His sovereign majesty blaspheme,
Or count him less than the Most High."

Faith is here looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God; is waiting for him in holy expectation, and loves his appearing; but the scoffers in all ages have said, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The day will come, the sign of the Son of man shall appear in the heavens, the veil of the heavenly temple shall be drawn aside, and He who went in there with a sin offering as our Priest and Intercessor, shall come forth as the Judge of all, and the everlasting Saviour of them who waited for him. Then, too, there is that great doctrine, the resurrection of the dead, which faith has always especially regarded; and which when the Gospel was first preached, was the object of

so much of the ridicule of the wise men of the world. It was not expected that the dead should rise again. And even now, the doctrine is exposed to much philosophical obloquy, if our philosophers would tell us the truth. The pride of human reason revolts at the doctrine, and looks with contempt on that faith which rests satisfied on the faithful word of Christ, that the hour is coming when all who are dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth to the resurrection of life, or the resurrection of damnation. But that faith shall be justified and honoured when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God. Faith has consigned to the grave the dearest relatives and friends; but while we have been standing there, with swelling heart and tearful eye, we have been enabled to say, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day;" and though we have sorrowed "concerning them which are asleep," yet not "as others which have no hope;" for as we believed "that Jesus died and rose again," so also, that "them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, beautifully argues this point: "For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." In other words, the whole Church shall be glorified together, in company, and so shall the saints meet their Lord to be for ever with him. And then shall that faith which calmed so many swelling hearts, and dried up so many tears, be justified and honoured. And finally, the faith which in seasons of darkness and affliction rested immovably on the sure principles of the word of God shall thus be justified and honoured. In this world the saints of God have rested especially on his wisdom and love, and they have waited till the dark cloud should disperse, and both shine forth in their eternal splendour. Something of their brightness often breaks through the cloud on earth, and even should it be as with a watery beam, yet sheds holy cheerfulness on our path. But at the appearing of Christ there shall be the full manifestation of the wisdom and love on which faith rested. The saints of the living God shall then appear in a state of entire perfection, and meetness for the heavenly inheritance; and this meetness shall be seen to be the result of that discipline to which they were subjected on earth,—the discipline of the word, and ordinances, and providences of God, rendered effectual by the Holy Spirit, to the completion of that mighty change by which a fallen and corrupt creature is made meet to enter into the presence of God, and dwell with him in an everlasting fellowship. It will then be seen that though love chastened and afflicted, yet it never abandoned, them who trusted in it. They followed, even when they were led as blind by a way they knew not; and now that they can remember and trace all the way by which they were led in the wilderness, their song of grateful rapture is, "He hath done all things well." Their faith is "found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

I have pointed out to you the excellencies of faith, both as to its

moral effects in this world, and its glorious results hereafter. Is this faith yours? If you have it, remember, it has turned you to God, it has made you spiritual men, it leads you continually to aspire after something higher and better than earth can bestow. If you have it not, you are Christians only in name. Such faith as you have will only expose you to greater shame and wretchedness at the appearing of the Lord Jesus. Out of your own mouth he will condemn you. You have called him "Master" and "Lord;" and yet, with sad and guilty inconsistency, you have not done the things which he commanded. Awake from this deathly sleep; see your miserable condition; and take up your resolution,—

"I must for faith incessant cry,
And wrestle, Lord, with thee;
I must be born again, or die
To all eternity."

I beseech you, examine yourselves; and if you feel your need of this grace, then take the means which God has appointed for securing it. Meditate on the truth in which faith is concerned; read the word of God in the spirit of prayer; stir up the gift of God which is within you; earnestly seek for the gift of the Holy Spirit; and seek for all through Jesus Christ: so shall you "obtain like precious faith" with the people of God even from the beginning. And then live under its influence, and you shall enjoy its benefits and comforts through life; and when you stand before the throne of God, and he shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and you dwell in your long-desired, long-expected heaven, then shall you indeed experience that patient, active faith is "found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

SERMON CXI.—*The Importance of Charity.*

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal," 1 Cor. xiii, 1.

AFTER wonderful revelations, St. Paul had a thorn in the flesh appointed, lest he should be exalted above measure, think too highly of himself, and fall into spiritual pride; and hence we are taught, that no state of piety, no office in the Church, no privilege or special act of grace, places us out of the reach of temptation and danger.

This may render it less surprising to us, that some persons in the Church at Corinth, endowed with the eminent gifts of the apostolic age, should be puffed up by them, unnecessarily display them, each think his own gift superior to that of another; and that parties, contentions, and schisms in the Church should be the result.

This is an humbling consideration; and it is recorded to teach us watchfulness and wisdom; and especially to draw off our regards from every thing outward in religion, however splendid and imposing, and direct them to the root and principle of all true piety in the heart.

What could be more impressive than the gifts of that age,—tongues, healing, prophecy, wisdom? Yet there was something, not only more

excellent than they, but without which they would leave the possessors, useful, indeed, to others, but unfurnished for eternity: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

Let us consider,

I. What is that charity which is the substance and reality of all true religion.

II. The manner in which the apostle enforces its importance and necessity.

I. What is that charity which is the substance and reality of all true religion.

It is not necessary to inform you that charity is not used in our translation in the restricted sense of almsgiving.

Nor does the apostle mean that kindly and benevolent disposition which naturally distinguishes some persons much more than others. The common corruption of our nature takes different forms, and has different manifestations. And hence, as to temper and disposition, without any religious principle, some persons have a natural mildness of spirit, which bears some, though a distant resemblance to the charity here spoken of; but this is not what the apostle intends. That is confined to the few who are thus favoured by constitution; but this is represented as common to all true Christians, however opposite may be their natural temper.

Nor is the charity in question any affection which by human skill and labour can be produced in human nature. Education and example do much to restrain the outward expression of the malevolent passions; nay, it is a part of courtesy to hide them, and simulate the contrary; but envy, anger, malice, and uncharitableness are still there. "The heart of the sons of men," unrenewed by the grace of God, "is full of evil."

What is called moral philosophy, too, has had, in all ages, its rules to correct these evils, and to cultivate opposite virtues. But the results we have seen. Wherever men were left under the tuition of mere philosophy, the world and its teachers became worse. And why? Because, though they stole something of the rule from revealed religion, yet they never looked to the regenerating power of God. They expected "grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles."

Brethren, charity, as described here, is a grace only of regenerated human nature. It springs only from love to God. This must be produced in us before we can have true charity; and the process by which this new affection of love to God is wrought in man ought therefore to be well understood.

If the charity here spoken of cannot exist, but as it flows from the love of God, how is that produced? It is not mere sentiment; admiration of God's greatness and glory, which the heart in its unregenerate state may even strongly feel. It is not that grateful sense of sparing mercy and offered grace, of which a penitent, amidst his humiliations, may be sensible, and which encourages him to pray: for there is still in him too much fear, for love, filial love to exist. "There is no fear," says St. John, "in love."

But the humiliations of a true penitence precede love; for they precede pardon: and when that pardon is administered to one who is

“convinced of all, and judged of all,” who abhors himself, and pleads guilty before God; and administered, too, as he knows it is, through such wondrous means as the death of the Son of God himself, and attested to the soul by the condescending witness of the Holy Spirit; then we love him, because he first loved us; and with fulness of heart consecrate our whole selves to our great Deliverer. Now, this is the fruit of the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. To that it is expressly ascribed: “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” And then God is delighted in; God is obeyed; God is worshipped; every thing in God is loved, his holiness most of all; and the soul desires, studies to be like him. This is the great leading grace, because it carries the soul to God, and establishes a communion with him, from which all strength and all joy proceed.

See what this affection is toward God in the primitive disciples. When the flames of pentecost descended, and kindled the spark already there into higher ardour, they became men wholly consecrated to Christ. Zealous for the honour of his name, and the triumphs of his grace, they published his Gospel every where; when reproached, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to be treated with opprobrium for a name so venerated; when banished from men, they assembled in deserts to worship, and to sing their hymns of praise; and in death, their very tortures were made tolerable by the ardour of this mighty affection.

And see it now, though the impressiveness of such outward circumstances does not exist. In myriads of hearts it raises devout and hallowed thoughts; leads from the creature, to rest in God; renders every active duty a delight; suppresses all complaint in suffering; so communes with God, as to shed abroad unutterable peace through the soul; and changes the very character of death into the gate, the way which brings the soul that loves God into nearer communion with him. To this state we must be brought, and under the influence of this affection live and die, or we shall never see God.

In the verses that follow the apostle speaks of this same principle chiefly, as his subject required, in its acting toward men. And here there is this reason why I should only briefly notice this enumeration of its qualities: it is, that the meaning is generally obvious.

“Charity suffereth long” the weaknesses and provocations of others; and is still “kind” in temper, and ready to return good for evil. It “envieth not” the superior advantages of others; from the knowledge, that this is of the wisdom and goodness of the common Lord. It “vaunteth not itself,” and “is not puffed up;” recollecting that it has nothing but what it has received from God. It “doth not behave itself unseemly,” unbefitting our character, circumstances, and relations; but dictates a delicate respect to what is morally and religiously fit. “Seeketh not her own;” is not selfish; nor “easily provoked;” it is the only cure of an irascible temper. “Thinketh no evil;” is not suspicious, nor yields to evil surmisings. “Rejoiceth not in iniquity;” in the sins and faults of others, though an advantage might come by it, or an enemy be humbled. “But rejoiceth in the truth;” in the diffusion and prevalence of truth and holiness through the world. “Bearing,” or covereth, “all things;” putting them out of sight, or their worst features. “Believeth” and “hopeth all things;” puts the most favour-

able construction on all doubtful things, and hopes well in all. "Endureth all things;" patiently sustaineth all afflictions, as from the hand of God.

Such is this great and shining grace, existing in all these principles in all the regenerate, and which it must be the business of our Christian life to carry into its perfect manifestation, by prayer and holy exercise.

II. The manner in which the apostle enforces its importance and necessity next requires our attention.

He places it above all miraculous gifts, all almsgiving, all zeal, all knowledge, and above even faith and hope.

1. Above all miraculous gifts.

He does not depreciate them; but he exalts charity. They were the extraordinary attestations of God to the truth of his Gospel in primitive times. But "though I" should "speak with tongues," not only of "men," but of "angels;" "prophecy," both in its ordinary sense of preaching with convincing energy, and foretelling future events; "understand all mysteries," the meaning of the Old Testament types, and other deep truths; nay, though I knew all things that can be known by man; and though I crowned all by the miraculous faith, performing things most impossible to human power, enabled to remove mountains;—thus endowed, what am I, without this love to God, and love to man? "Nothing!"

And here an error of the day requires me to make a few remarks upon these miraculous gifts.

(1.) It is contended that they would have been continued in the Church had men remained faithful; and that therefore now, if men ask them of God, they will be restored.

In answer to this, I may say, that serious doubts have been entertained by wise and good men, whether miraculous powers were really continued beyond the apostolic age. Yet there were many whose piety was as great in ages succeeding. It is also obvious,

That their plain office was to favour a rapid promulgation of the Gospel throughout the principal nations of antiquity, establishing it by these evidences, and then leaving it to make its way by the power of an evidence which could always be appealed to, because it was a matter of historical record.

Hence, in fact, the Gospel did make its way by the native teachers, raised up after the apostles, till the Roman empire became professedly Christian.

And in our day, we see it able to convert the heathen, and change the religion of all nations, without those extraordinary means, simply by God's blessing upon ordinary instrumentality.

Nor is there any want of evidence to demonstrate its Divine origin to the end of time.

(2.) With respect to the pretended gift of tongues, one cannot but speak with shame and sorrow, that a delusion so monstrous should ever have been yielded to, and that so clumsy a device of Satan should ever have entrapped men, probably sincere, but under the dominion of their own imagination.

For, look at the primitive gift. It was a "tongue," which people of some language could understand; not the jargon now pretended. It

was for use, in publishing the Gospel in foreign lands; chiefly a sign to them that believe not, and not to them that believed. Therefore, these people, who at present pretend to have a language, have it not for use, where all believe.

When used in any of the churches, lawfully used, it was because those churches were chiefly in the Greek, Roman, and Asiatic cities, where people of many languages united together; and there was the gift of interpretation, that all might be edified. But, in the present case, all know English, and need no other language in order to their instruction in Divine things.

Finally, when those who had this gift used it without necessity, or without interpretation, the apostle condemns them; and sets so light by it, that, though he spoke with tongues more than all, yet he used them not in the Church.

(3.) I may remark that there is not the shadow of evidence that what is now pretended is a gift. It is no language that these people utter, but a poor and pitiful delusion, which brings religion into ridicule and contempt.

But to return. The apostle exalts charity,

2. Above the most profuse almsgiving, and the loftiest zeal.

He no more intends to depreciate these, than the miraculous gifts. To give alms is a sacred duty. To die for truth is also a duty; and the glorious company of martyrs will for ever have the veneration of the Church. But if almsgiving went so far as to give all our possessions, and zeal went so far as to die at the stake; without charity neither would profit. So does God look upon the heart, and try the motive, that such men would have no reward in heaven. So he said of the Pharisees, "They have their reward;" meaning they have their reward here, but not hereafter.

3. He sets it above knowledge; and he dwells the more on this, because of the estimation in which knowledge was then held.

At all times, but in that age especially, true Christians properly had a high sense of the light of the doctrine into which they had been brought, and by which they were distinguished from others; but even that might mislead them, as it does many now, to rest in their accurate notions. There was even a passion for moral and theological systems. Philosophical schools existed, and mingled Christianity with the speculations of men, and made schemes, under the name of Gnosis, or knowledge, eminently; hence, Gnostic sects, all boasting of knowledge. Now, how does the apostle correct this? "We know in part," says he, "and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Partial knowledge shall hereafter be done away, like twilight before day; like the elements of knowledge received in childhood; and obscure views, like objects seen through Roman glass, which was dim and cloudy, will be superseded by distinct perception, and perfect certainty. All these are reasons

why Christians should not place their chief glorying in their present knowledge.

4. But love abideth.

This places it above faith and hope. It is an abiding grace. Tongues shall fail, and prophecies cease. Faith gives place to sight ; and hope, to fruition.

Love abideth. It does not undergo the change which our knowledge does. There is a great deal of putting away in that, as childish, conception ; but nothing is put away as to love. It is more perfect in degree, when we enter heaven ; but it is the same simple principle which carries the soul to God, unites it to God, subjects it to God, and consecrates all the powers to him, as a whole burnt offering, in its own sacred fire for ever.

1. We see the tendency of men to mistake the external circumstances of religion for religion itself.

This is constant ; but it is the more dangerous and deceptive, when that which approaches near to spiritual things is made its substitute. So the array of the Spirit's gifts was made the substitute for love in the apostolic times. In our day, perhaps, zeal for doctrines, and for good institutions ; perhaps even the study of prophecies, and of the plans of God ; perhaps a vain looking for the personal coming of Christ, instead of his manifestation in the heart ; mislead many to their spiritual injury. Let us beware of these things.

2. Let us elevate our views to the true character of the religion of Christ.

Love is its principle ; love its vital flame. It is not enough that we live under a sense of sin ; nor that we have the fear of a servant ; nor that we cultivate principles of integrity. Love is the end of the commandment. You must be humbled ; but you are to be exalted by grace unto favour ; and from a sense of God's love to you, you must love him again. There must be strength of principle, and the delight of the affections. There must be outward conformity to the rule ; but the impelling power must be a love of God's holiness, and of the expression of it contained in his word. Obedience is to be free, the choice of the will, and the pleasure of the heart. God is a spirit, and requires a spiritual affection and service.

3. Let us mark how much of religion exists in temper.

We are too apt to place it in opinions, outward duties, and forms of worship ; whereas it is nothing less than the holy love of God and man.

4. Rejoice in the prospect of a future state, which this chapter opens.

Knowledge there will be clear and full. We shall see face to face. Love, which unites the soul to God, and by union raises and exalts it for ever, will reign uncontrolled. We shall receive there knowledge from immediate revelation ; and fellowship with God, the object of our love, will be most intimate and uninterrupted.

SERMON CXII.—*Christianity of Divine Origin and Authority.*

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God,” 1 Cor. ii, 11, 12.

THE apostle here asserts the claims of Christianity; that system of religion which he was appointed to teach. It had been esteemed a stumbling-block by the Jews, and it had been accounted foolishness by the Greeks; but Paul contends that it is the wisdom and power of God; no new invention, but ordained before the world. He hesitates not to assert, that what they called wisdom was foolishness; and that what they considered foolishness was the true, the highest wisdom. The world, by its boasted wisdom, knew not God; and it had pleased God, by the preaching of what the world accounted foolishness, to save—actually to renew, and comfort, and place in a state of safety—all them who had believed.

The apostle supports the claims he was advancing, by professing to have received this system of religion by inspiration from the infinitely wise God;—a claim, this, of a broad and imposing character, and yet one which naturally arises out of the reason of the thing. An infidel would say, that all persons who have introduced novelties into the various religions of the world have always laid claim to Divine inspiration. This is easily accounted for, whether they were inspired or not. It supposes this,—that the common sense of man teaches him that it cannot be obligatory on a man to believe any religious doctrine, but as it comes from God. We are to believe what God teaches, as we are to do what God commands. If, therefore, the apostles had not been inspired, then would their writings have contained merely their own opinions, and they would have had no authority to demand the faith of any reasonable creature. All pretensions to inspiration, indeed, must be supported by sufficient evidence; and by such evidence are the claims of the apostles supported. There was the evidence of the miracles which they were enabled to work in the name of the Lord Jesus. There were sensible miracles. Ignorant persons spake with tongues which they had never learned, and even foretold future events. Lepers were cleansed; the lame were enabled to walk; the dumb to speak; the deaf to hear; the blind to see; and even the dead were restored to life. And there were what may well be called moral miracles. It was a saving system that was preached to men. It effected its great purpose in the conversion of men. It proved itself Divine by doing that which no human system had ever done, or could ever do. It had power to renew men in the entire spirit of their mind and to create them anew unto holiness. With all this evidence, well might St. Paul say, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.”

In the text, however, he seems to intimate and meet an objection. The Greeks might have said, “We have our own men of learning; men of highly cultivated reason, who have devoted themselves to studies of various kinds, moral and religious. What need have we

therefore, of all this vast apparatus of inspiration and miracles to bring truth to us? Is it not discoverable by enlightened and exercised reason?" The apostle answers such a question as this in the negative; asserting, that as no man "knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him," so also "the things of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God;" and that therefore, that man may know the things of God, the Spirit of God must reveal them. This is the doctrine contained in the text. It presents two propositions, which, by God's blessing, may be usefully considered.

I. The things of God are made known to man only by revelation.

II. That revelation cannot be effectually understood except by the influence and aid of the same Spirit by whom it was first given to mankind.

I. The things of God can only be known by revelation.

This is evidently the sense of the text; and the proposition stands opposed to the opinion of those persons who fancy that by the exercise of their own understanding all essential religious truth may be discovered by men, independently of a revelation from God. No, says the apostle. As the internal thoughts of a man are only known to himself, till he informs others of them, so no man can know the things of God, except as they are made known by God himself. The proposition now before us may be brought to apply,

1. Against those persons who deny a revelation from God; and,

2. For the instruction of those by whom that revelation is admitted.

1. As to the first class.

They themselves are found, in fact, to surrender the principle. They themselves allow the reasoning in the text. We have never understood that any person, in what nation or time soever, has supposed that a man shut up in darkness, and unable to view the universal frame of nature above and around him; that a man, unconnected with society, and knowing nothing of the facts of the moral and providential government of the world;—we have never understood that any persons ever contended that a man thus shut up could ever discover any thing of God by the mere exercise of his own reason. They tell us, on the contrary, that all nature is crowded with the creatures of God; that his providence gives us indications of his moral perfections; and that the principles by which we judge of good or evil exist in our very nature: and they tell us, that by an attentive consideration of these things, we may come to the knowledge of God, and of his will. We contend that in saying even thus much they admit the principle, that revelation is necessary, and the fact, that revelation has been given. They admit that the Spirit of God has inscribed on the page of universal nature significant symbols of the Divine Being and his perfections. They admit that God, by the dispensations of his providence, has announced his moral character and will; and that man, by looking into himself, may find traces of the Deity, fixed there by Deity himself. They acknowledge, therefore, that instruction both may be, and is communicated by symbols; by some sensible mode in which God chooses to make known what would otherwise have been unknown. And thus they admit the principle, and the general fact.

The principle being thus admitted, the entire question is reducible to this,—whether, or not, that particular kind of revelation found in nature is sufficient to inform man of those things of God which it is essential for him to know? We will not argue the question, whether any thing in nature would have suggested the idea of God to us, if we had never before heard of him; whether any thing in ourselves, or in the train of human events, would have raised us up to this high discovery. I believe not. But, not to argue that part of the question, I should conceive that every person will acknowledge that it is essential for man to know at least two attributes of the Divine nature,—goodness and mercy.

I think I can show you, that without the revelations of Scripture, the goodness of God would have been very doubtfully adumbrated or shadowed forth to us in nature; and that without those revelations of his mercy to guilty man we should have known nothing. It is true, indeed, that many who have acquired instruction from the book of God, guided by its light, can go to nature and providence, and find in them many proofs both of goodness and mercy. But consider how partially they view the subjects presented to them. They take only one single class of the phenomena on which they profess to construct their system. They look, for instance, only at what are obviously the beauties of nature, and do not regard its apparent deformities. They look upon the shining sun, but they forget to look upon the devastating storm.—They look at life in its enjoyments, but they forget to look at its miseries. They consider man in his pleasures, but they overlook him in agony, and disease, and death. They look at certain wonderful provisions, by which God supplies the wants of his creatures, but they dwell not on those seeming contradictions which the administration of the affairs of the world is continually presenting. Now we, with our Scriptures, can account for all this. We can harmonize all these phenomena, reconcile their existence with the Divine character, and rejoice that the Lord is good; but without revelation this could not be done. But if, without revelation, thus obscure and doubtful would have been our views of the Divine goodness, of mercy, which implies pity for those who have reduced themselves into a state of misery by sin,—of mercy, which implies pardon for the guilty, we should have known nothing. Without this book, where should we go to find a single word to support the hope that God would forgive the sins of his creatures? Certain it is, that nature, so called, indicates nothing of this in any of her works. Nor is it indicated by that course of human events which passes before us. If God be favourable to the guilty, he must either waive his just rights altogether, or find some means to satisfy them, without the actual punishment of the offender. In either case it is a matter to be determined by himself, and can only be known by us when he is pleased to reveal it. We should, therefore, untaught by this sacred volume, be so unacquainted with the things of God, as to be ignorant of what he would do with the guilty. Take the question, “What must I do to be saved?” Universal nature furnishes no reply; the oracle is completely silent; nor can our trembling spirits hear any single accent of mercy, of encouraging grace, till revelation directs us to Calvary, and calls us to “behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”

If, therefore, the goodness of God, and the mercy of God, the two principal attributes in which lie the foundations of all human confidence and hope,—if they cannot be known, but by revelation, how could we have obtained any acquaintance with those other great and important subjects of which the Scriptures furnish the account? as, how we became sinners, and how we may cease to be such; that our spirits are immortal; that there is a state of existence for the soul when separated from the body; that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, a final judgment, and a state of eternal rewards and punishments;—on all these points nature furnishes no information whatever; and, without revelation, we must be entirely ignorant of them.

2. But as the proposition may thus be applied to the correction of the error of those who deny a revelation, so it is full of instruction for those by whom it is admitted.

The things of God—his character and designs—are only known to us by the revelation which the Spirit of God has given to us. As believers in this Divine book, we are convinced of the necessity of a Divine revelation; but that takes us no farther than some of the wiser heathens went, who acknowledged that a revelation from heaven was necessary for the discovery of the truth they sought. But we go beyond them. We acknowledge not only that we need a revelation, but that we have one. God has given us one by his Son and Spirit. And now nothing is doubtful. The darkness is past, the true light shineth, and, with respect to those things which it presents to our understanding and will, all is day and certainty.

But, having received this revelation, the great practical result must be, full submission to its authority. This is a most important duty, and not always sufficiently practised even by those who profess to pay deference to the inspired pages. Observe, then, this duty of submission in two things,

1. We must always be careful to place our belief of the doctrines of this book on its true principle,—that they are doctrines of God, revealed by him.

Being once revealed, they may appear evident to the understanding; but let it be observed, that our obligation to believe does not rest upon their being thus evident, but upon this firm and unshaken ground, that they are taught us by a revelation from God. We know, indeed, that to man has been given a mental constitution of such a character, that when the truth is properly presented and regarded, it will command our assent. I grant, too, that all the doctrines of the Bible are reasonable, or founded on reason, or the nature of things, because they rest on the eternal reason of Him who is the infinitely wise God. Nor do I deny that, in the doctrines of Scripture, we may discover much of this reasonableness, this harmony and proportion; and these discoveries are often the means of strengthening our faith. But this is not the basis on which our faith is to rest. With those doctrines which are not accompanied by this kind of disclosure and evidence, our faith is to be as satisfied as with those which are. There may be a revelation of facts; and these facts, thus made known, our faith is to receive, simply because they are made known to us. Let me endeavour to make my meaning plain. I most certainly believe in the universality of the extent of the atonement for sin made by the death of Christ; but on

what ground do I believe it? If I rejected the opposite doctrine of contracted redemption, merely because it appeared to me to be partial and unjust, I should think I was resting on a very wrong foundation. I ground my belief of the universality of the atonement on what appears to me to be the plain and obvious meaning of Scripture. And so of any other doctrine. And,

2. This important proposition instructs us as to the manner in which religious doctrines are to be stated and defended.

When we speak of these "things of God," we are to speak of them, not as "man's wisdom teacheth," but as "the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing things spiritual with spiritual." Our weapons for the defence of God's truth are to be fetched from God's armoury. In all controversies, "Thus saith the Lord," is to be conclusive; and thus are we to show to Divine revelation the deference and submission which it demands from us.

II. I have now to observe, in the second place, that no man can properly and savingly understand the revelation which God has given to us, without the direct influence of that Holy Spirit by whom it was first communicated.

This may be inferred from a few passages. Such as, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we may know the things that are freely given us of God." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." There are two observations which it may be proper to make before we go into this subject. The first is, on the kind of agency by which the Holy Spirit instructs men in the truth of God. He does not communicate any new revelation to them. No man may pretend to a new revelation, unless he can show miracles in proof of his pretensions. He who should thus speak in the name of God must bring with him evidence as decisive as that by which the old revelation was demonstrated. Another observation is, that even to the natural or animal man, the man under the power of his sins, there is as much made known in the Scripture as may convince him of its truth, and show him the need of those gracious influences which shall give the truth itself its proper and full effect on his mind.

It is necessary that we should understand the sense in which the Scriptures use such terms as, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is not such knowledge as is merely produced by sufficiency of evidence. It implies as well a sense of the importance of that which we believe; such a sense as shall awaken the dark and sleeping spirit of man to a consciousness of his danger, and thus dispose him for the reception of that aid which is promised to all who sincerely desire and seek it. "To know," is to know experimentally. It is not merely to know that such and such doctrines are found in Scripture, but to experience their influence on the soul. It is not merely to know that certain promises are recorded in Scripture, but to experience their fulfilment to ourselves; so to know, as to have peace brought to our conscience, and the love of God written on our heart. It is, in one word, to realize the whole system of Divine truth, and to have it embodied in our experience, and evidenced in our words and actions. Now, without the Spirit of God, these "things of God"

cannot be thus known, known experimentally and savingly. The natural man cannot thus discern them. And for what reason? Because, first, the whole of his attention is occupied by earthly things. He dwells under the influence of "the spirit of the world;" the spirit which has all its enjoyments in the things of time and sense. On these he sets his heart; nor has he time for any thing beside. And then, the natural man discerns not these things, because he has no desire to discern them. There is not only indifference, but hostility to truth, wherever there is the love of sin. What man who is a sinner wishes to be reminded that he is in danger of everlasting wo? What natural man wishes to introduce into his understanding a more extensive knowledge, thus rendering the operations of his conscience more sensible and distressing? Such a man hates the light; and therefore he will not come to it, that his deeds may not be reprov'd. And there is another reason. The powers of the mind have sustained a great injury by sin. For spiritual discernment there is needed a power which we now do not possess. In addition to this, we may observe that our habit of conversing with sensible things does increasingly incapacitate the mind for clear reflection on those spiritual truths, the influence of which is necessary to our salvation. A man, whatever strength of natural powers he may possess, who has throughout his life addicted himself to such light reading as might serve to strengthen and increase the element of wit in his mental constitution, should he be called to close thinking, would find himself very unfit to enter into these severer reasonings to which he had never been accustomed. But while there is some proportion between the various kinds of human knowledge, there is none between the objects to which the natural man has devoted himself, and those truths, the knowledge of which constitutes the wisdom which is unto salvation; and therefore they are impressively said to be "foolishness unto him." He receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. If, therefore, we would effectually "know the things that are freely given to us of God," we must receive, "not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God."

In conclusion,

1. If we have received such a gift from God as the one which I have been just describing, surely you will think an appeal to your gratitude not unseemly.

A gift of so excellent a kind should be constantly acknowledged by us. Without that, we have light enough from the word to know the natural and moral character of God; light enough to see our miseries, and the cause of them; light enough to show us our duties, and our helplessness too. But if we had not received "the Spirit which is of God," though we might have seen the great remedy provided in Christ, who is set before us in the Gospel, yet we should not have availed ourselves of it. If we are indeed thus experimentally instructed in the doctrine that God leaves not man to himself, but gives his Holy Spirit to them who ask him, to be their light and guide all the way through life, these are considerations which, if any can, will excite our gratitude, and call forth our songs of praise.

2. Recollect that the great object of all these gifts and revelations is our personal salvation.

God has called us to contemplate no object below this. For this

Christ was sent into the world ; this book put into our hands ; the Holy Spirit promised ; the Sabbath instituted ; religious ordinances established. It matters not how much we know, if we know it not practically, and in reference to the great object of the revelation itself. And, be it observed, that our negligence enhances our guilt. The light shines around us, and we refuse to come to it. We may be totally indifferent, as to the acquisition of religious truth, and so we may continue in ignorance. But that will be no excuse for us. The Lord Jesus, at his second coming, shall "take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel."

3. Lastly, let us never forget the doctrine of the text, when we turn our thoughts to religious truths.

As these sacred revelations have not been given to man but by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, so they are never efficacious, never savingly apprehended, but under the influence of the same Spirit. I know nothing that more discovers the pride of the human heart than the vain opinion, that we can, without heavenly aid, savingly apprehend the truths of the inspired pages. Fall not into this error. Neglect not the book of God. Meditate upon it day and night. But forget not to pray, with David, "Teach me thy statutes ;" "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

SERMON CXIII.—*The New Birth.*

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit," John iii, 8.

JESUS spake to the Jews, who were often careless about the truth, or prejudiced against it, in parables, that seeing, they might not see, and that hearing, they might not understand ; but he always received sincere inquirers with the utmost condescension and kindness. He stooped to their weakness, and rendered the instructions he gave them equally explicit and powerful. They sat at his feet, and heard his word ; and, wondering at his wisdom and kindness, they often exclaimed, "Never man spake like this man." We have an instance in the chapter now before us. This was the case with Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night ; and yet, though that seemed to imply considerable doubts as to his mission, and personal fears as to the opinion of his associates, Christ did not visit with marked displeasure these infirmities. He saw that his heart was desirous to be right ; he therefore at once unfolded the mysteries of his religion, and spoke of his own personal claims, and the design of his coming. And he did this more explicitly than he had done to any other person on earth. At the outset of this conversation, Nicodemus was put to a severe trial. Truth flashed at once upon an eye not accustomed to behold it. Educated as he had been in all the forms of the Jewish religion ; accustomed to attach such importance to his natural descent from Abraham ; having no right views of spiritual religion ; Jesus Christ at once presented this startling proposition : "Except a man be born again, he

cannot see the kingdom of God.” It must be observed, that the phrase, “to be born again,” was not first used by Jesus Christ. It was well understood by the Jewish people. When proselytes were made from heathenism, and converted to the Jewish faith, such persons were said to be born again. They had received a new set of principles; they were introduced into a new family, the family of Abraham; and the God of Abraham became their Father and their God. Hence the propriety of the phrase. But it was supposed by the Jews, that, though it was necessary for heathens to be born again, by renouncing their idolatry, before they could be entitled to the blessings of Moses’s kingdom; yet that themselves were entitled to these blessings by virtue of their natural birth. This will explain the answer of Nicodemus. Not understanding that it was necessary for the Jews to have any other title to the blessings of the kingdom of the Messiah than their natural birth, he says, in evident surprise, “How can a man be born when he is old?” Having heard it thus strongly affirmed, that the natural birth of the Jews would not entitle them to the blessings of Messiah’s kingdom, he now receives more information, but information which was still more surprising. “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” This passage has a very simple sense, which, in a certain controversy, seems frequently to have been overlooked. The Jews, when they received proselytes from heathenism, received them by ablution, by baptism. By that expressive rite, they were supposed to be purged from all the former pollutions of paganism. The meaning of Christ was evidently this. Not only had not any Jew a title by natural descent to the blessings of the kingdom of the Messiah, but they must as openly renounce Judaism by public baptism, as the others had to renounce paganism, and be born again to the new religion which they had embraced. And, in addition to this, the whole moral nature was to be renovated. They were to be “born of the Spirit.” “That which is born of the flesh,” said Jesus, “is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Natural birth cannot make us spiritual, or entitle us to the blessings of this spiritual kingdom. He adds, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” Yet Nicodemus did marvel. The three propositions which Christ had just laid down were to him very astonishing. They were, first, that the Jews had no title by natural descent to the blessings of Messiah’s kingdom; secondly, that to enter that kingdom they must renounce their Judaism by baptism; thirdly, that men must be brought under a Divine influence, and that their former ceremonial religion would avail them nothing.

In the words of the text, our Lord cautions Nicodemus, who was saying, “How can these things be?” against arguing from the difficulty of the subject to its impossibility. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” In nature we must be content to take effects, where we cannot trace them up to their causes; and so in religion. “So is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

We shall briefly consider,

I. The nature of that moral change expressed in the text by the phrase, “born of the Spirit.”

II. The agency by which it is effected.

III. We shall show, that the difficulties which may appear to be attached to this doctrine furnish no argument against it.

I. The nature of the moral change implied in the words, "born of the Spirit."

If we make Scripture its own interpreter, and compare spiritual things with spiritual, we shall find that this change is,

1. A change from darkness to light; that is, from ignorance, unacquaintance with ourselves and the things of God, to such an acquaintance as shall be sufficient for our salvation.

I do not mean to say that when a person comes to a knowledge of the doctrines of Christ by study—led to it by mere human curiosity or other such motives,—when thus he has acquainted himself with religion as a science, that this knowledge is any proof of his being born of the Spirit. There is a knowledge of Christ to which we may be brought by education, and by our own personal application and study; but never let it be forgotten that what is "born of the flesh is flesh;" that what is merely human cannot produce that which is spiritual. No application or study can, in the true sense of the words, turn men from darkness to light. The knowledge of which I now speak is that knowledge of ourselves, of God, of Christ, of religious experience, of our own accountableness, of a future state and final judgment, which, being demonstrated by God's Spirit to the soul, shall influence our future conduct, and form our future character. The Spirit is necessary, both that the truth may be revealed to the soul, and that the mind may be opened to receive it. The veil is then removed from the heart; "the eyes of the understanding are enlightened." Whatever other knowledge we possess, however vehemently we may talk on religious subjects, yet, except we have felt the truths of the Gospel exerting their proper and sanctifying influence on our hearts, we are not "born of the Spirit." This implies,

2. The utter destruction of the power of sin in the heart.

We are naturally under its tyranny; and if the religion of Christ could not deliver from this, it would do little for man. From this all his miseries take their rise. In reference to this, we are told, that "he that is born of God sinneth not;" that "he keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." "Sin shall not have dominion over you," said St. Paul; and, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Thus are we exhorted to "reckon ourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God;" and to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Observe, however long the habit of sin may have remained; however closely it may have interwoven itself with our interests, our purposes, and our pleasures; however constitutional our sins may be; yet are we required to put them all off: and if there be any truth in the declarations that we are to be so born of God as not to commit sin, as to become new creatures in Christ Jesus, then must all our sinful habits give way before the powerful agency which works this mighty change in us.

"Bound down with twice ten thousand ties,
Yet let us hear thy call:
Our soul in confidence shall rise,
Shall rise and break through all."

3. This change introduces us into new connections and relations.

On this subject St. Paul is explicit. He tells us, that, before we became Christians, we were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise." While in the world we had the friendship of the world; but that was enmity to God. We were connected with those with whom God is angry, and whom he will finally punish. But when thus changed, we are introduced into intimate connection and union with a new society; the most glorious society on earth; that which God is preparing by his grace for everlasting felicity; we become connected with God's people, by whatever name called. We then "come to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God." We become one with them on whom the eye of Christ is ever fixed; of whose interests he takes special care; who never meet in his name, but he is in the midst of them; whose cause he is continually pleading with his Father; who are entitled to all those promises made to them as members of his body, the Church. We come "to an innumerable company of angels," who are all ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; "to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," who becomes our elder Brother, our Friend, and Protector; and "to God the Judge of all," to be acknowledged as his friends, his sons and daughters, members of his family. But, that I may not multiply particulars on this part of the subject, I observe,

4. The change implied in being born of the Spirit supposes the creation of new principles.

Faith is now inspired, even the faith which realizes the future, and places it continually in our view, so that we now have an object for which to live in the present world. There is love, both to God whom we choose as our portion, and to all mankind for his sake. There is hope, exciting our passage to the skies, teaching us to despise the world, and to labour for eternity. We have now new enjoyments, arising from the presence of God and the practice of devotion. Our one great principle is a holy, affectionate desire and intention to do the will of God, and in our body and spirit to glorify Him, whose we feel and acknowledge that we are.

These may be considered the leading characters of the change expressed by the words, "born of the Spirit." He who so knows the truth of God, that that truth becomes impressive and practical; he who is so changed in the spirit of his mind, that he ceases from evil, and does good; he who is brought into communion with the true Church of Christ; he in whose heart the active principles of faith, hope, and love, and spirituality, are planted, and continually improving; he is the man who is born of the Spirit.

II. The agency by which this change is effected. We are to be "born of the Spirit," by the direct influence of the Spirit of God on the soul.

The work of the Spirit of God upon the human mind is one of the grand peculiarities of Christianity. I do not mean to say, that the doctrine never was known before. The Gospel was preached to man before Christ came. And all the earlier editions of Christianity were dispensations of the Spirit, in that measure in which it pleased God that his influences should be poured forth. Hence we read of God's Spirit striving with man in the antediluvian world. And David prayed,

"Cast me not away from thy presence ; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." John, however, specially designated the dispensation of the Messiah as the dispensation of the Spirit. "He that cometh after me is mightier than I ; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire ;" that is, with the fire of the Holy Ghost ; with that Spirit, in all the fulness of his active power, which might well be compared to the element of fire.

Where true Christianity is, there is the doctrine of Divine influence ; and in proportion as Christ is known, there is not only light, but life. Where Christ is preached, every man receives a "manifestation of the Spirit," that he may profit by it. There is not a sinner who goes on his course of transgression and folly, who is not often checked in his career by the kind and restraining hand of God. There are seasons when God visits sinners, to keep back their soul from the pit. He is continually at work in society. Some he saves, and others he makes ten thousand times better than they otherwise would be. And this Divine agency is more particularly connected with the preaching of the Gospel. "And lo," said Christ, "I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Paul plants, and Apollos waters ; but it is God who giveth the increase. God is with all the ordinary means ; with the perusal of his word ; with private instruction and converse : but, observe, the Divine presence is specially and particularly with the preaching of the Gospel. "Preach the Gospel : lo, I am with you alway." This is the reason that a faithful ministry is accompanied with such success. I cannot think that the Gospel ministry can be faithfully exercised without success. What is called "the Gospel" has, indeed, often been preached to no purpose. An imperfect Gospel may not have the promised influence accompanying it. But when the whole Gospel of doctrines, experience, and duties is faithfully preached, Christ says, "Lo, I am with you alway."

And this is an agency that is to be sought and obtained by prayer. The Spirit of conviction, indeed, comes when men neither seek nor desire him. In this sense may Christ truly say of us, "I was found of them that sought me not." But when thus convinced of sin, we obtain farther supplies of the Spirit in answer to prayer. By prayer we obtain a larger acquaintance with ourselves. By earnest prayer we obtain the Spirit of faith ; the power to believe, to trust in Christ alone for salvation. By prayer the Spirit of adoption is brought from heaven, and fixes his residence in our hearts, enabling us to call God, "Father." It is by prayer that the Spirit of God continually enlightens, and strengthens, and carries on his work ; adding stone to stone in the temple which he is building, till the top-stone is added, with shouts of "Grace, grace unto it."

It may probably be necessary, for the sake of this most important doctrine, that of the direct influence of God upon the soul, to meet some objections, advanced by persons who oppose it. We are not prepared to allow that the Holy Spirit, having first given that word, leaves it to the operation of some natural power which the truth is supposed to contain. I rather think that when the word comes, it brings along with it the accompanying Spirit ; that when the rays descend, they quicken as well as give light. If this doctrine be given up, we fall into serious errors and contradictions. Knowledge, of itself,

is not found to be efficient enough to effect human salvation. That "knowledge is power," may be a very good maxim in philosophy ; but it is a very bad one in divinity. Knowledge enables a man to employ about natural things the power which he actually possesses ; but the knowledge which the word of God imparts discovers to man, not his strength, but his weakness. It is the knowledge that brings this along with it, "Without me ye can do nothing." When the understanding is enlightened with truth, and the will is brought to consent, even that is not enough. A man cannot do the good which his enlightened will prefers, till God works in him, not only the will, but the power. Thus the denial of the direct influence of God upon the mind contradicts the testimony of all good men. We cannot read of a man eminently distinguished for devotedness to God, but he professed to have a consciousness that God was with him. The very heathen often acknowledged that no man was wise or good without a Divine inspiration. And what is more than all, this denial contradicts the declarations of the Bible. We know, indeed, that there are some persons who refer all passages which speak of the work of the Spirit, to his extraordinary operations in the earliest days of Christianity ; to that power which the apostles and some of the first Christians possessed of working miracles. Let us examine that for a moment. It cannot be denied, that the New Testament not only speaks of those operations of the Spirit by which men wrought miracles, but of those also which enabled them to repent and believe ; which empowered them to conquer sin, and do the will of God. If that be acknowledged,—and it cannot be denied,—then if Christianity does not at present possess this accompanying power, it is inferior now to what it was then. If God gave to the first Christians his Holy Spirit, enabling them to repent and believe, to support them under trouble, and to assist them in prayer, and if that Holy Spirit is not given now, then has religion lost its saving power. We are just as corrupt and helpless as were the first Christians. We need the same assistance that they needed. If you remove the foundation, where are we to build ? If you leave the temple, what is it when abandoned by the great Inhabitant ? The pool is no longer supplied by living streams, fresh from the throne of God and the Lamb ; and its waters become stagnant and corrupt. The glory is departed, not only from the Church, but from the very religion of Jesus Christ. But we cannot admit this, when we read in the word, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It is therefore not like human institutions, which become weaker and weaker every age, but like the sun, still pursuing his course, and pouring forth the unabating streams of light. And this denial would make prayer any thing but a rational service. There is not a single form of words in which a man can address himself to God, who does not believe in the doctrine of Divine influence. He cannot pray for even temporal blessings, unless he supposes some direct interposition of almighty God in their bestowment. And as for spiritual blessings, that we make them the subjects of earnest prayer, supposes them to be the work of God. Remember, then, in the first place, that the Spirit of God is that great Agent by whose power this great change, the new birth, is effected in us ; and in the second place, that as this change is still necessary, so the agency by which it is to be effected

is still attainable. Every man who wishes to experience the blessing has only to ask it of God in the way he has appointed. In opposition to the declarations of men place this of Christ: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

III. The difficulties which may appear to be attached to this doctrine cannot be fairly urged as objections to it.

That there are difficulties in religious matters, we are ready to allow. They arise from three sources.

1. Our own inaptitude.

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. A course of vanity and worldliness unfits the mind for the apprehension of spiritual things, like the hand of a man doomed to hard labour, which loses that delicacy of touch that can convey to the mind an idea of the difference between minute objects. Is it for you who never think of God, who are steeped in sensuality and worldliness; is it in the nature of things, that powers so gross as yours should discern spiritual things? By habits of this kind you must have even lost whatever capacity of spiritual discernment you might once, by the mercy and grace of God, possess.

2. A second class of difficulties in religion arises from our confused notions on the subject of religion itself.

Some men exaggerate the difficulties, in order to excuse themselves. To admit the plain truth, would be to enlighten their conscience; and that they dread. If we will not walk by the light God has given us, then are we given up to the wanderings of our own minds. Wherever there is a bad heart, a heart which refuses to do the will of God, there will always be found a confused head.

3. And, thirdly, difficulties will arise from the very nature of the case.

Who does not expect to meet with difficulties in religion, that firmly believes and seriously considers religion itself to be the product of an infinite mind? The religion that could be measured by our limited intellect, would be poor and diminutive indeed. There is a sort of infinity about religion, in consequence of which it shall continually administer to our knowledge and holiness. When we meet with a difficulty, we ought to ask whence it arises; whether from the nature of the case, or from our own incapacity to apprehend it. If a man looks on all the doctrines he cannot comprehend, to be for that reason false, he should remember there are many things which he now knows to be true which once he knew not: and, consequently, by the mode of reasoning he chooses to adopt, though now true, yet previously to his comprehending them, they were false. Hence it is that we find many still saying, with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" They want all the details pointed out. But if God vouchsafe no answer to the question, the doctrine is not on that account to be rejected. Do we ask, "How can God operate upon a human soul?" Let us rather ask how he moves matter; how he supports the world upon nothing; how he paints the flower with such various hues. All these operations of God are but a part of his ways; and yet they are past finding out. You want to know how God works upon the soul. Ask how

your soul operates on the body. How does the mind of one man operate upon the mind of another, not merely by instruction, but by example and sympathy? How does one mind often fall under the influence, and come into the very track, of another? When you have explained these, then will I tell you how God works upon man by his Spirit. Nor can we tell how this Divine agency is connected with human freedom. Some persons say they can tell you; but their confidence is no proof of their knowledge. There is in man the consciousness that he is free; and the explicit declaration of God is, that we can do nothing good without his Holy Spirit. Every good work done by the true believer is, in some way or other, made his own act; and yet they all acknowledge, "Thou, Lord, hast wrought all our works in us." "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" nor can we discover the laws by which its particular movements are governed and regulated. Sometimes it blows gently; and at others there is the storm, and the mighty rushing wind; and then, again, all is calm. Who can account for this? And who can account for special spiritual visitations on particular persons and districts? But though you cannot account for all the movements of the wind, you may sensibly know them. "Thou hearest the sound thereof:" that, therefore, you can tell. And so may every man know the fact of the Spirit's influence by experience. I think even the wicked may be brought forward to prove these general observations. Tell us if you can account for those mental struggles before the commission of sin; those pangs of conscience after? You have no control over them. You cannot account for them but by referring them to the visitations of the blessed God. So of another of these spiritual phenomena. Here is a person who feels the guilt of sin pressing on him like a heavy load. He is seeking pardon, and believing, as fully as he can, that Jesus Christ has died for him, and for all mankind; and yet he derives no comfort from all he does till the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him. You have often direct demonstrations of the presence and work of the Spirit. Sometimes, when you are not thinking about God, your thoughts are directed to him, your affections are quickened. So you have felt under the ministry of the word, and in different religious ordinances. All prove to you, that there is a power which visits the human heart, and works upon it, and which we are taught to refer to the Spirit of God, whether we can fully explain it or not. We hear the sound of the wind, though we cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth.

I conclude by remarking,

1. Our ignorance of these things is a great reproach to us.

"Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" Nicodemus ought to have known them. The Old Testament is full of references to spiritual operations. Nicodemus was ignorant of the meaning of his own Bible; and it is possible for you, Christians, who hear so much of the Spirit and his work, who read of it, who have it preached,—it is possible for you to remain in real ignorance even of these important truths. Turn your attention to them. It is necessary that we be made new creatures; and we can only be made new by the influences of the Spirit. O seek, by earnest application to God, to prove whether they are true or not!

2. Recollect that any thing which leaves us short of this great change is comparatively of no use to us.

I dare say that Nicodemus was as good a man as Saul of Tarsus, before his conversion, and either of them as good as ourselves. Yet was it said to him, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." You may be introduced by baptism into the visible kingdom of God; but what will that avail you, if you are not born from above, born of God? O rest not in forms and appearances! Paul was willing to suffer the loss of all things that he might win Christ. You bear his name; let not that content you. You must win Christ. By the power of the Spirit Christ must be formed in you, and dwell in you, as the hope of eternal glory.

3. This is so necessary, that a man cannot enter the kingdom of God hereafter without it.

Read the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, and mark that expressive part of it, "And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage." What is that readiness? It is the deliverance of the soul from sin; the renewal of the whole nature in the image of God. But how shall you be made perfect in holiness, in the fear of God, if the work never commences in you? And it commences here: "Ye must be born again." If you hope ever to enter the kingdom of God in heaven, bow now before the throne of God, and ask for the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of regeneration. Come to God by his Son. Seek for the forgiveness of sin by faith in his blood, that, being justified by faith, the love of God may be shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost given unto you. So shall you be indeed saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost shed on you abundantly through Jesus Christ your Saviour.

SERMON CXIV.—*The High Privileges of Believers.*

"But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel," Heb. xii, 22-24.

THESE words cannot be fully understood without referring to the preceding verses. Here the apostle speaks of Mount Sion, and there of Mount Sinai: "For ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."

As the words cannot be understood literally, we must look for the meaning which is couched under these noble figures, or allegories ; and this the scope of the epistle will show.

The believing Jews are the persons to whom he writes. They were tempted to apostatize from Christianity, and to go back again to the law. It is the consequence of this which St. Paul so awfully paints. What was that law to which they were solicited to return ? The apostle reminds them of the awful manner in which it was given ; and intimates that all this terror was intended to display the fearful majesty of God, and to show that the very declaration of his laws to sinful, fallen, guilty man, must overwhelm him with dread.

But if this was terrible to the Israelites of old, who had their atoning sacrifices to fly to, what must it have been to the Jews in that day, who had given up the typical and sacrificial import of those sacrifices ? and even if they had not given them up, whose sacrifices were now, in fact, abolished by the death of Christ. They sought justification by the works of the law alone. The awful scenes of Sinai, therefore, were used by the apostle emblematically, to express the effect of separating the law from the Gospel, works from faith, justice from grace ; and he who sought justification in this way is represented as going to Sinai. And will you meet God there ? Will you meet him in his majesty and terror, fire, darkness, tempest, prohibition of drawing near, a sound of words, that is, of commands, and a publication of penalties, terrible as the trumpet of battle ? That you cannot bear. Whether God make the wretched man who thinks his imperfect obedience will secure his justification, to know what his law is, in death, or at the judgment, when he shall speak all these words in the sinner's conscience, as he spoke them then, that man will be overwhelmed, and perish amidst the withering splendours of unpropitiated majesty and reproofing holiness.

Upon these views, therefore, the apostle grounds his exhortation to hold fast the Christian profession, which had the only sacrifice for sin. For if Sinai was a type of the law, Sion was of grace, as embodied in the Christian system. "And ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire ; but ye are come to Mount Sion."

You will perceive that I do not refer these words, in their primary meaning, to the heavenly world ;—ultimately they belong to that, because the Church on earth is the figure of the Church in heaven ;—but the apostle speaks of that Sion to which true believers now come ; and of that city of which they are now the spiritual inhabitants.

Let us, then, briefly survey the different parts of this representation, and bless God for our privileges, in his rich and abundant grace manifested to us.

I. "Ye are come to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."

This is not the first time that Mount Sion—the mount where the temple and city of Jerusalem were built—is made a type of the Christian Church ; it is the standing type of the New Testament Church throughout the prophetic writings ; and from the very nobleness of the type, we may collect the importance and the true glory of that which is typified by it : if the shadow was glorious, what is the substance ?

Nothing, indeed, is so despised by the world as the true Church. When any branch of the Church has had visible wealth, and influence, and honour, those external trappings have been held in admiration; but the spiritual Church, which has no visibility but holiness, which spreads through all the world, and is confined to no party, the bond of which is faith and love, that Church is overlooked and despised; its principles are such as the world cannot estimate, because it cannot understand them. This Church is now, as ever, spurned by the proud, and contemned by the sophist; yet here is the Sion, the city of God, and this Church, so disregarded, is typified by the city which God called his own, where the temple raised its consecrated towers, where God himself deigned to dwell, where the tribes went up to their solemn assemblies, where songs, written by inspiration, filled the sacred courts, where sacrifice was offered and accepted, pardons were dispensed, and the blessing of Jehovah was solemnly pronounced upon an accepted people.

Behold, brethren, all this in a less visible manner; but in a higher sense than the Jews ever contemplated: the name of our city is, "The Lord is there." Thither the tribes from earth's remotest bounds go up in spirit; there the tear of penitence falls; there the voice of praise, the incense inflamed by love, arises; there faith brings its one true sacrifice; there pardons, which reach the conscience, are dispensed; there sanctifying influence descends; there man draws near to God; and there God gives his great and effectual blessing. "Ye are come to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" that is, as St. Paul says, the Jerusalem above; not the earthly, but the spiritual; the mother of us all; the Church, our birth place; and all who are born there, and are truly regenerated, are free from the guilt and power of sin, and walk in the habits of a new and exalted life.

II. "Ye are come to an innumerable company of angels."

To an innumerable assembly of angels: the word here used signified, among the Greeks, an assembly convened on some joyous, solemn occasion, as on days of public rejoicing, the festivities of which were connected with religion. In the Church, then, there is such a joyful assembly of angels.

We may observe,

1. That we have here a striking contrast between the ministry of angels under the law and under the Gospel.

As the law was given by the ministry of angels, they appeared in a manner suited to the occasion; in attributes of terror, wielding, probably, the elements, compelling the clouds, and urging the tempests. The voice heard was probably that of an archangel, as the immediate representative of God, and was a voice of terrible majesty. Wherever they are connected with wicked men, they are the instruments of terrible justice: they appeared as the flaming sword of God at the gate of Eden; the stroke of one of them filled every house in Egypt with mourning, when he slew the first born. But on Mount Sion, that is, in the Church, the aspect of angels is mild and gracious. As they who are joined to the Lord are one spirit with him, so angels must burn where God is angry; but where God is in mercy, their benevolence must also flow forth. The different offices assigned to the angels show that the law is wrath, and Christianity a system of mercy.

2. That the number is instructive. There are myriads of them, and their number is indefinite and countless.

During our Lord's ministry only one or two appear. He was then in humility, not in state. Yet an invisible scene of angels was exhibited when the Father brought his first-begotten into the world. All the angels of God were commanded to worship him, the God-man; and they pledged themselves to the cause his love undertook. When, too, the time of his humiliation was past, and Christ ascended, there, behind the clouds,—as David beheld them in prophetic vision,—the chariots of God were “thousands of angels.” St. Paul represents all intelligences in heaven, principalities and powers, as taught by the Church the manifold wisdom of God; and in the book of the Revelation all in heaven and earth have the same interest, all sing the lofty anthem of eternal praises to God and the Lamb.

What a sweep there is, then, in Christianity! How large its grasp! Worldly men, even the philosophers of the world, leave it out of their calculations. Statesmen go to their policy, sophists to their theories, in total forgetfulness of this, that God has a cause in the world; that he has an invisible Church, more powerful, than all the visibilities of earth; that he makes all things subservient to it; that all things serve it: the loftiest powers of earth, unconsciously; the most malignant powers of hell, reluctantly; all the powers of heaven, the innumerable company of angels, joyfully. For,

3. This is a joyful assembly of angels.

So the word *πανήγυρις* signifies. The meeting of angels in the Church is always festal. For what do they see there? Sinners repenting. And there is joy in heaven among the angels of God when one sinner repenteth. They see pardons dispensed; the family of God increased. They see the new creation rising out of dark and polluted human spirits, more transporting than when they saw the elements of earth emerge from chaos in order and beauty. They see men kept in temptation, pure and undefiled, by the power of God. They see death vanquished by the faith of the feeblest Christian; that great enemy put under the feet of a child; and from the Church they see souls emerge, all purity, light, and love, to join their society, and swell the glorified throng in heaven. The word is used of the assembly at Olympus.—The assembly is joyful; and we come to it, and partake, in our measure, of the same joys, and share in the same triumphs. Angels are spectators of the glorious course which believers run, and will exult to see them crowned with glory at last.

III. We come “to the Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven.”

This is a description of the true members of the Church on earth; the Church, or assembly, with which the assembly of angels invisibly connects itself. They are the first born. In Scripture this is a phrase which denotes that which is especially excellent. The first born, too, had peculiar privileges. But the reason of the use of the term here is, that the first born were consecrated to God. Among the patriarchs, the priesthood was theirs; and it was the law of Israel, that the first born was especially the Lord's: so that in exchange for those sacred services of religion, which they were bound to pay, as ministers of the sanctuary, he took the Levites in their room. The Levites in their

ministrations, were therefore the proxies of the first born of all Israel. This shows the sacred, consecrated character which was attached to the term "first born," and explains our text. The Church of Christ is composed of devoted, consecrated persons. All the Lord's people are prophets, and all are priests. This is our profession, if we are Christians; and if not, our profession reproves and condemns us. Even David could give this as a description of a godly man, that God hath set him apart for himself; and it is the same now. True Christianity separates man from profane and unhallowed uses. The regenerate nature cannot affect the gross pleasures of sin; no, nor the refined pleasures of the world. It distastes even its gratifications; it counts nothing an enjoyment, but what leads to God: and thus separated from sin and the world, it stands prepared for God's ministry; for the sanctification of God's first born is not negative. Theirs is a service. The meanest Christian has to perform the service of praise, prayer, and intercession.

If this be Christianity, let each of you say, "Am I a Christian?" Be humbled, if you are not; and know that in proportion as this consecration is complete, we best answer the character which we bear; and the greater number of consecrated persons any religious body contains, the better are its claims of being considered a true Church. They are said to be "written in heaven," because the first born of Israel were written on earth. God knows who are his, and acknowledges them. This is meant by their enrolment. He also blots the apostate out; and we may therefore know when our names are in the register of heaven.

IV. Having spoken of the Church on earth, the city of God here, the community diverse from all others, the assembly of the first born, and the assembly of the angels, filling the courts of Sion, mingling in the holy interests of believers, and witnessing the trials and triumphs of the faithful, the apostle leads our thoughts more directly up to heaven, and shows the scenes which, in connection with the Church, and for the Church, are unfolded there.

And here we have three objects.

1. "God the Judge of all."

The word "Judge" is not used here in a judicial sense exclusively, but in a regal sense. The city of God has its king. The assembly, whether of angels, or of the first born, or the spirits of just men made perfect, are the subjects of God. Now, when it is said that he is God the Judge or Sovereign of all, this great truth is taught us, that angels and redeemed, saved men are under the same government, and enjoy the felicity, in common, of being the subjects of God, in the same sense. Let us consider this.

It had been little to have said that God is the ruler of them all, in that general sense in which he rules the whole universe. He rules among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth, and in the depths of hell. But that rule is to many, nay, to all the sinful and the rebellious, terrible and destructive.

But there is a reign of God over his creatures, which is at once their highest glory, and the only source of their felicity. The angels which keep their first state know this. It is the gracious rule of God over their willing minds and affections; so that all their high powers are

under right control and direction ; and the dignity of their nature is constantly advanced ; while the power of God guards them from all evil. That is God's reign over us, if we belong to the Church. O glorious condition ! Man comes by grace into the state and relation of the highest angels. His powers are sanctified ; the will of God is the law in which he delights ; his soul, with all its powers, is placed willingly under the control of God ; the hand of God is upon every spring of his moral nature, giving it strength and a right direction. Love is the bond of both parties : God ruling as a Father ; the creature obeying as a child ; while in regard to that rule of God which he extends over other beings and things, his wide, vast government keeps off every evil, or turns it by mighty, mysterious operations into present and eternal good. Happy people in such a case, yea, blessed people who have the Lord for their God ! We have a striking type of all this in the history of Balaam, who made several attempts to curse Israel, but, in spite of all his efforts, was compelled, by an invisible and irresistible power, to bless them altogether. O that we could impress upon you that religion is this gracious reign of God ! Believers, come to God the Judge of all ; and you may come thus to him, and share in his protection and blessing.

2. The second view which the heavenly world presents is "the spirits of just men made perfect."

Here several important particulars call our attention.

"The spirits of just men made perfect," must mean disembodied spirits, in a conscious state of being ; unless to be made perfect, could mean to be without consciousness and enjoyment, which few persons would have the hardihood to affirm. They are the spirits of just men ; for none are made perfect but they ; and to be, in the evangelical sense, made just, is absolutely necessary before we can enter there. They are not innocent, but washed from sin in the blood of the Lamb ; and accounted, treated as just, through believing. They are also made actually just by regeneration, by virtue of which they partake of the Divine nature.

"Made perfect." This term is used of the Olympic racer, who had completed his course, and taken the prize. So the apostle : "I have not attained," or I am not already perfect. As allusion is here made to the Olympic assemblies, so the angels of God witness the contest of believers, trace them to the goal, and see them made perfect ; that is, measuring out their course of advancing holiness, of usefulness, of labour, of sanctified suffering ; and then, receiving the prize of eternal life, from God the Judge of all.

But heaven is the state of perfection ; not absolutely, as though increase were shut out,—which is the perfection only of God ; but comparatively, and in a glorious sense.

Knowledge is there so perfect, that error in what is known is shut out ; and there will be nothing misty and partial in our conception of the truths we know ; but all will be firmly grasped, and apprehended influentially, so as to be brightly demonstrated ; and moving and transforming. This is especially the quality assigned to heavenly knowledge.

And holiness is perfect, up to the standard of the perfect law, the law of love. The heart is filled with love ; and the practice which

flows from a perfect love is full, unwearied, yielding all that God requires.

And power is perfected: not merely moral power, but physical. All the injuries which any faculty of the soul had sustained are repaired; and all that the body has sustained are removed. And even the body, when raised again, shall be strong, deathless, and spiritual.

And safety is perfected: for the rewards of toil, and contest, and danger, are now administered. The people of God are emphatically called the saved; saved eternally from sin, and the danger of sin; and so as to be for ever with the Lord.

But what does the apostle mean by our coming now to "the spirits of the just made perfect?"

We who embrace Christianity come to behold the scene of futurity. What can throw such a scene open before man as Christianity, which places before us patriarchs, prophets, apostles, saints, the noble army of martyrs, a great multitude which no man can number, enjoying God in glory? And how is all this proved to be real? The resurrection and ascension of our Lord prove it. Thus life and immortality are brought to light; and we lift up our eyes, and see all the redeemed, down to the latest friend we have parted with, now perfected with God.

But when we come into the Church, we enter the same society; for the family in heaven and earth are one. The same promises are made to us as were made to them; and we are assured, that, if faithful, we shall come to the spirits of just men made perfect, and be as perfect as they.

3. But in the heavenly scene, thus unfolded, appears our Lord, in his office of High Priest and Mediator.

And this may well close the whole; because only through him have any entered there; and it must also be through him alone that we can attain the same glorious state. In this sense "no man cometh to the Father," but by him.

Behold, then, how many important topics, connected with our salvation, the character of Mediator, under which Christ is set forth, contains. A mediator supposes two parties, God and man; and never could these have been one but through him. He comes between the offended and the offenders, to mediate and reconcile. He bears the office in question especially for this end.

But this office supposes the suffering and death of the Mediator. The first thing required was satisfaction offered to offended justice, before mediation between the parties could be allowed. Hence the new covenant, of which he is here said to be the Mediator, is called by himself "the covenant in his blood;" procured by it, and deriving its efficacy from it. But the atonement for sin being offered, the covenant is with the Mediator, to offer pardon to the guilty, and to carry that offer into effect. In its provisions there is forgiveness to the penitent who believes, the fulness of grace, and the consummation of all in glory.

Now, here Christ is represented in the actual exercise of this great office in heaven. The imagery is taken from the temple; when the high priest, having entered the holy place, sprinkled the mercy seat. Here Jesus is seen making the required atonement, and sprinkling the mercy seat with his own blood; so that the sign of the grand accepted

atonement is before God continually; and strikingly to point out the efficacy of the sacrificial blood, a voice is given to it, and it is contrasted with that of Abel: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." It appeals to me as the Judge of the earth, demanding that such a crime should not go unpunished. And the curse was inflicted. Here the voice is heard pleading for mercy. Hear it on the cross: "Father, forgive them." And hear it now. It still speaks the same language; and it cannot speak in vain. Your Saviour has gone to heaven, not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with his own blood, which there "speaks and prays, all prevalent for helpless man."

"His blood is still our ransom found,
And speaks salvation all around."

To this speaking blood "you are come." Ye penitents, why do ye not commit yourselves, and the concerns of your salvation, into the hands of this High Priest? Trust in him, and so shall ye obtain "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

You, believers, are come to this "blood of sprinkling." In every act of prayer, remember the atoning efficacy of that blood, and expect an answer to your petitions. The gracious covenant which has been ratified by that blood is yours, with all the blessings which it comprehends. Plead the faithfulness of God; plead the covenant blood; and expect every blessing through the Mediator, who is your Friend and Advocate with the Father.

Conclusion.

1. You see what it is to be a true Christian.

A Christian is a member of that spiritual Church of God, whose names are written in heaven. He is reconciled to God through the blood of the cross, and lives in all things subject to God's will. By constant, believing, and fervent prayer, he is daily deriving from God covenant blessings through Christ the Mediator. Nothing less than this is Scriptural Christianity.

2. If you are convinced that this is not your character, do not despair of attaining to it.

You, also, are invited to come to "the blood of sprinkling." The whole scene of grace and mercy stands open before you; and the salvation of the Gospel is as free for you as it ever was for any child of Adam. For you the Saviour died. "Ask, and ye shall receive."

3. The case of those who refuse to be saved through the mediation of Christ is hopeless.

Apostates, who trample upon the blood of the covenant; Socinians, who systematically, and in the teeth of Scripture, deny its atoning virtue; infidels, who reject the whole revelation of God, and therefore reject the entire scheme of redemption; must all meet the holy and spiritual law of God. They appeal from Mount Sion to Sinai, with its blackness, and darkness, and terror. For them "there is no more sacrifice;" and the curse of violated law must therefore fall upon them, in all its power and bitterness.

4. Let us, as Christians, walk more worthy of our calling.

Believing in Jesus our Saviour, we belong to the Jerusalem which is above; and our names are enrolled in the book of life, with all those of "the spirits of just men made perfect." "What manner of per-

sons," then, "ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?" Let us be more spiritual in our views and affections; walk more like the citizens of heaven; and look for the hour when we also shall be disembodied, and shall fully realize those scenes which are now open only to the eye of faith.

SERMON CXV.—*The Armour of Light.*

"Let us put on the armour of light," Rom. xiii, 12.

THAT was an expressive figure by which the advent of our Saviour was announced, "The Day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." He himself says, "I am the light of the world; if any man follow me, he shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." St. Peter, speaking of the Christian revelation, says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place;" not only till the light shine all around, but "till the day dawn,"—till there be a corresponding illumination in your souls,—“and the Day-star arise in your hearts,”—till you are, in this respect, full of light, knowing the heavenly doctrine, and thoroughly experiencing its sanctifying influence.

The apostle, in this chapter, and in some other parts of his writings, speaks of the moral acts and moral habits of believers, while in their Gentile or pagan state, as being "works of darkness;" works of darkness, because agreeing with their ignorance of God and of Christ, of salvation and eternity, and of all those moral motives which such considerations will supply; and therefore it was consistent enough for them to walk in the vanity of their minds, under the dominion, and in the practice, of divers lusts and pleasures. But, from the peculiar character of Christianity, as a dispensation of light, of pure truth and perfect holiness, he derives a very powerful motive to the laying aside of every work and habit of darkness. We are, therefore, exhorted to "put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds;" and, in the context, it is said "that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep," since "the night is far spent,"—the night of the Gentile world, the light of the Gospel having already begun to dissipate its shades,—and "the day is at hand,"—the full day of truth and purity,—“let us, therefore,” he exhorts, "cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." To this last part of the exhortation I am now going to direct your attention.

In order to enforce this important injunction, let us inquire,

I. What that armour of light is with which the apostle exhorts us to invest ourselves.

II. Why it has the appellation of "armour of light." And,

III. Let us attend to the motives which should induce us, in compliance with the exhortation, to array ourselves with it. "Let us put on the armour of light."

I. What is that armour of light which is spoken of in the text ?

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the apostle has entered more largely into the subject ; and, finding various graces of the Christian character corresponding with the various parts of the armour worn by the well-accounted soldier of Greece and Rome, he illustrates the value of these graces by instituting the comparison, and presenting us with a view of the Christian in his complete armour ; he speaks of its different parts, and exhorts us to “take unto us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” The Christian, while on earth, is a member of the Church militant ; he must pass through successive contests, and be defended against various attacks, at once insidious and powerful. Nor is he to be content with merely escaping unhurt ; he is to act on the offensive ; he is to carry on a warfare against his enemies, as well as defend himself against any warfare which they may wage against him. His course is as that of his Lord ; and, like him, and in his strength, he is to go on conquering and to conquer. That is the position of every true Christian. No man can have any claim to the Christian character unless he be carrying on this warfare, heroically determined on moral conquest, and listening to the animating words of his Lord, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

But the several parts of the armour of light ought to be rightly understood by us, as they are described by the apostle, or in vain shall we be generally exhorted to take to ourselves the whole armour of God. There must be, first, the military girdle, that which was intended to give support, and firmness, and uprightness to the body : “Having your loins girt about with truth.” By truth, however, the apostle does not here mean doctrinal truth ; for that is implied in “taking the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” He uses truth in the sense of sincerity, absolute sincerity in the consecration of ourselves to the service of Christ, our great Head. Every man may be conscious of this ; in fact, if it exists, we must be conscious of it. We may be conscious of many infirmities, it is true, which may not forfeit our Christian character ; but we must be conscious of our sincerity. It is this which gives firmness to the spirit, and enables us to look our enemies in the face ; furnishing a sound plea for our appeal, with David, to almighty God : “I am thine ; save me.” The consciousness that we have thus given up ourselves to God will gird up the loins of our minds, and thus support and strengthen us.

The apostle next speaks of “the breastplate of righteousness ;” a word signifying here, all holiness, inward and outward ; for St. Paul never separated the two. And, as the breastplate defended the vital parts, so, brethren, it is this holy habit,—a soul created anew to love holiness and to hate evil, and, from this newness of nature, to carry into practical effect all the precepts of Jesus Christ,—it is this which guards the Christian soldier from harm. Whatever injuries we may sustain, they cannot reach the conscience while this breastplate is there. And when the conscience is kept pure, all is safe ; but let the breastplate of righteousness be laid aside, and the fiery dart reaches to the conscience, and all is polluted.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.” This refers to the military greaves and shoes, which, according to the

ancient mode of arming, were designed first, by their construction, to give a firm footing in slippery places, and likewise to guard against those gins or traps which were sometimes hidden in the ground; a method of annoyance of which many instances are to be met with in the history of ancient warfare. Commentators are not a little divided in opinion as to the meaning which the apostle intended to convey by the expression, "the preparation of the Gospel of peace." The word, properly speaking, signifies readiness. It cannot mean, as some have thought, a pacific disposition; that seems to have no relation to the subject. Nor can it mean a preparedness, a readiness, an alacrity in the military march; for the apostle is not conducting the metaphor in that way; he is not speaking of the army as marching, but of the army standing in close array, and actually engaged in the conflict. He says, "Stand, therefore;" and, "that ye may withstand in the evil day, and having done all, stand." We must find, then, the meaning of the phrase in the epithet which is added to "the Gospel:" "the preparation of the Gospel of peace;" an expression which, with the Apostle Paul, very generally means reconciliation, reconciliation with God; and suggests to us this important thought, that there is no man put into a state of preparation for the Christian conflict but he who is at peace with God. He who is not the possessor of this peace is not ready for the warfare, he cannot find firm footing for the attack; he is a slave, he is held in bondage; he is in the case described in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, he is tied and bound with the chain of his sins, and groans, it may be, for deliverance; but he is not in the proper attitude of resistance, he is held captive. When reconciled through faith, he is "made free from sin," and becomes "a servant to God," and is then placed in opposition to his spiritual adversaries,—and to fight the good fight. It is this pardoning love and regenerating grace, the personal experience of this blessed influence, which constitutes "the preparation of the Gospel of peace," which, having set the man free, gives him firm ground, and enables him, standing fast in the Lord and the power of his might, to beat down every enemy that assails him.

The apostle next alludes to "the shield of faith," the use of which is "to quench," as he tells us, "all the fiery darts of the wicked one:" either in allusion to those firebrands which were sometimes shot along with the arrows, or to the arrows themselves, the iron heads of which had been previously heated, in order to inflict more intolerable pain. And, in the first place, there is no doubt that the apostle refers to the persecutions to which believers were subjected in those days: "fiery darts of the wicked one," since all persecution, call it by what name you please, pagan or Christian, is from him. Men, in former ages, of great name, doubtless, have sometimes been engaged in persecuting and putting their fellow creatures to death; but never could any sanction to such deeds be afforded by the religion of love; so that, whatever their great names, whatever their general or occasional character, so long as they were employed in that work, they were the children of Satan, acting under his influence,—his emissaries. We may easily see, then, what the apostle means by "the shield of faith;" and how it would "quench the fiery darts" of persecution. When, in the strength of Christ, and a firm belief that there

is a martyr's crown for the martyr, joy is seen connected with sorrow, triumph with shame, and life with death, how completely quenched will be every fiery dart of persecution? That is a beautiful illustration of this which the apostle gives, when, of the ancient Jewish confessors, he says, "Out of weakness they were made strong," that is, by virtue of their faith. But although the apostle refers to the influence of faith in seasons of persecution in the first place, unquestionably it has also this important effect, that it quenches every fiery dart of temptation, from whatever quarter it may arise; of affliction, however severe; this strongly changes their character; and that which seemed to threaten, when at a distance, will fall—arrested by this shield—harmless at our feet. Temptations and trials will only exercise and strengthen our courage, bring us to know more intimately what we are, where our strength lies, and make us the better acquainted with the loving-kindness of God our Saviour, and thus enable us more implicitly to trust in him.

The apostle adds hope, under the figure of the helmet, as it is more fully expressed in the Epistle to the Thessalonians: "and for a helmet the hope of salvation." It defends the head, the very vital part. Despair would chill all our exertions; every approach to it would render them feeble, and, generally unsuccessful. While the important grace of Christian hope, the value of which, perhaps, we are deficient in estimating; that wonderful affection, produced in the soul by the Spirit of God, which fixes only upon eternal realities, and anticipates their joys, contemplates the blessedness, the depth, the riches of the rest that remaineth for the people of God; it is this which lifts us up, and cheers and animates us to constant and persevering exertions in the Christian warfare.

Nor is it, brethren, by figure of speech merely that holiness, and faith and hope, are put among the pieces of defensive armour. There is no defence for us without these: let us remember that. If sin displaces the breastplate of holiness, unbelief deprives us of the shield of faith. And if despair lays hold on us, if hope is absent, then there will be little regard for eternity, and little acquaintance with strong and delightful anticipations of it. Wherever, then, these graces are absent, wherever they are not kept in lively and animating exercise, be assured we are utterly unable to resist the assaults of sin, the world, and Satan, and we must fall by the hands of our enemies.

And then the apostle adds, finally, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:" a good and adequate acquaintance with the word of God, in all practical matters, and a dexterity in using it, both in defence and offence. Our Lord himself has given us an instance of its defensive power in his own temptation; and what honour did he not put thereby on the Old Testament word! How easily might his heavenly wisdom have dictated new answers to Satan, quite as apt, and quite as frustrative! But he himself went to the Old Testament armoury; and thus teaches us how to reverence and depend upon the revelation of God. The Old Testament was the moral rule of our Saviour when on earth; it was the law under which he placed himself. The revelation of God, as completed, is our rule; and we are to oppose this to every thing in the form of temptation or trial, regarding it as laying down principles from which there is no appeal,

which we will not allow Satan to dispute, nor any one else in heaven or earth,—the word of God that shall stand for ever. It is in this way, brethren, that we shall successfully resist and drive off every temptation. Do not stand reasoning or disputing about them; but at once refer to the settled rule, the ruled cases, those things which have been determined by the absolute wisdom, and truth, and goodness, and authority, of God: this is your rule, and by this you must hold fast. Blessed is the man who takes “the sword of the Spirit” in that sense: he shall find that the habit of submitting himself absolutely to the decision of God shall save him in every species of attack. But then it is also an offensive weapon; for, as I said before, the Christian is to carry on an offensive warfare. Brethren, he is to do so individually. And how? By the word of God; not endeavouring to proselyte men to peculiar opinions, or to any thing else independent of their relation to the word of God; but by zealously and consistently, on all proper occasions, proclaiming the truth of God, defending that truth to the utmost of his ability, and applying it to others with kind affection and tender sympathy; endeavouring to take captive, out of the hands of the enemy, those who are in his power, to increase the obedient subjects of Jesus Christ, and limit still more and more the kingdom of Satan. Let us not forget this. What exertions do we make, not only to defend ourselves, but also to rescue others? That is the true way of making war upon the kingdom of Satan. And the Church is composed of individual Christians, so to speak, embodied, banded together. “Though I am absent from you in the flesh,” says the apostle to the Colossians, “yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order,” military array, “and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” But still the sword is “the word of God.” Human policy, human power, human influence, disconnected from this, are not the instruments which God has chosen for the enlargement of his cause; but the proclamation of his word by his ministers and people, carried out by the exertions of his Church, that has been proved alone sufficient for this great purpose, both in ancient and in modern times. If there is one lesson more forcibly taught by the history of modern missions, it is the sufficiency of the Church of Christ, in the strength and under the blessing of God, by the publication of the Gospel, the simple wielding of the sword of the Spirit, to win new kingdoms to the Saviour, and enlarge the extent of his dominion over the tribes of men. Such, then, is “the armour of light,” which we are exhorted to put on.

We proceed to inquire,

II. Why is it called “the armour of light.” For neither does the apostle, nor any other of the sacred writers, use metaphors for the sake of mere ornament; the Holy Spirit had no need of that; but all those ornamental expressions—and they are so in the highest and best sense—are intended either to convey some new truth, or to heighten the impression of a truth which might not otherwise have been so powerfully expressed.

1. The armour of which we have been speaking is called, no doubt, “the armour of light,” with reference to its origin, which is heavenly.

There might possibly be, in the apostle’s mind, an allusion to those fables of the heathen poets with which, as a learned man, he would

be familiar, and which represented certain favourites of their supposed deities as receiving resplendent armour, the workmanship of the gods themselves; so that, when they were arrayed in it, they were invincible. Brethren, we are truly taught, that our armour is heavenly, that it is the workmanship of God, that it is he alone who invests man with it, and that in vain we shall seek for it from any other source than this. It is therefore well called, in that passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians to which we have adverted, the panoply, the whole or complete armour, of God. Though it is true, that the sincerity, the righteousness, the faith, the hope, are all eminently human virtues, all supposing acts of the will, and a certain state of the affections, yet, nevertheless, they are wrought in man by God, and are found only in the regenerate. Whenever spoken of under any metaphor, they are spoken of with reference to their heavenly origin. Are they trees that spring from the seed? That seed is "the seed of the kingdom." Are they fruits? They are "the fruits of the Spirit;" for the glowing catalogue of Christian graces with which St. Paul has furnished us are all, like the parts of the Christian armour, human, but yet "fruits of the Spirit." Now, this ought to lead us, brethren, to ask those graces of God, remembering that we cannot, by any means, invest ourselves with them, and that we are to obtain them by prayer. If, then, you are naked, exposed to the attacks of your spiritual enemies, still slaves and cowards; if you are not actively engaged and striving for moral conquest; if you are still held by the chains of sense, and worldliness, and Satan; it is because you have never prayed, or because you have not followed out your prayers with perseverance and earnestness. Thus, while you might have been clothed with the panoply of God, and winning fresh conquests, you are still in the bonds of your enemies. O, awake, and call upon your God, that you perish not. He only can deliver you from the bondage in which you are held, and clothe you with the armour by which you may be always more than conquerors through him that loved you.

2. It is called "the armour of light," because it is only found where Christianity exists, and exerts its proper influence.

No man is seen in the armour of light but a true Christian. Let us consider this point. Our proposition is, that there is nothing which sets a man free from sin, and puts arms into his hands by which he may defend himself against its future attacks; nothing which can array him with principles that shall give him the victory in every contest, until at last, applauded by his Judge, he receives the crown of life which shall never fade away; there is nothing but Christianity that can do this. Man was never seen thus armed but under its influence, or under some of the corresponding and earlier dispensations of it to mankind.

Take, for instance, the ancient philosophers, who, it should be remarked, were not natural philosophers, as our modern ones, for the most part, are: they did not merely study the works of nature; they were moral philosophers, teachers of morals. And, indeed, they had great intellectual powers; and many of their views were exceedingly just and beautiful. But, brethren, we find no instance in which the philosophy of ancient times made a warrior such as the apostle describes, armed him with armour like this, and led him on to victory.

Hear what St. Paul says, with respect to these very men themselves; though "they knew God,"—had much better views of God, at any rate, than the multitude, and knew a great deal of truth,—yet "they glorified him not as God:" there was a cunning wickedness in them which vitiated their whole character, and all their claims to piety and truth. They "held the truth in unrighteousness," or, "restrained it for the sake of unrighteousness," kept it from being published among the people, in order to hold them still bound in the chains of superstition; and the curse of God came upon them; for they themselves became the slaves of the most common vices which degraded the herd of mankind, whom they despised, and kept in a state of ignorance.—"They were," says the apostle, "filled with all unrighteousness;" not conquerors, but slaves.

Look at a Pharisee. St. Paul tried whether Pharisaism would do, as powerfully, and perhaps as successfully, as any man; so that, "touching the righteousness of the law," he was "blameless." Yet he was held in the bondage of pride, and prejudice, and anger, hatred, persecuting malignity, and all uncharitableness. So that, under that goodly show of external virtue, there was a heart in bonds, a slave of sin and Satan.

Take our modern infidel philosopher, with reason and virtue on his lips, and with pride, selfishness, and passion in his heart, and most generally the dominion of sensuality in his life. Destitute of the influence of Christianity, he walks, it is true, in the great temple of nature, and applauds its majesty, its glory, its beauty, and harmony; but without any genuine adoration of God that created it. He investigates the elements of human nature, without ever detecting man's fall from God, or without feeling the least compunction of spirit at the evil he detects. He employs himself much about motives and ends; but he is himself insensible to that noblest end of action, that man should do all to the glory of God, having regard solely to the Divine favour and approbation.

Indeed, you may take any other description of persons, even our orthodox doctrinalists. However careful and rigorous in the observance of forms and ceremonies, if there be not the direct influence of Christianity received into the heart, as the gift of God in Christ, continued and maintained by the presence of the Holy Spirit, whose offices and work are acknowledged, you never see man arrayed in "the armour of light," and gaining moral conquests: you find him still man, the slave; some of these evils of which we have been speaking have dominion over him; he is separated from that mighty influence which alone can inspire with courage, and sustain, and bring him to glorious victory. It is "armour of light" then; it comes not through the means of human device, however distinguished by intellectual or any other pretensions. It comes not in that way. There is but one way in which it comes to man,—when he feels his soul fast tied and bound with the chain of his sins, and, in the simplicity of his heart, looks to Christ as his appointed Deliverer, and believes in him; then, believing, he has life and strength through his name: for whom the Son makes free, they are free indeed. And by habitual prayer he is enabled to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free, so as no longer to be entangled with the yoke of bondage.

3. But there is a third reason why it is "the armour of light,"—because it corresponds with the character of our dispensation, which, as we observed at the commencement, is a dispensation of light.

There is a correspondence between all those principles and graces and the dispensation. Let me illustrate this by reference to a passage which St. Paul gives us: "The weapons," says he, "of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." There is the correspondence; they are not carnal weapons, such as would possess a mere fleshly power, but "mighty through God," and therefore spiritual; corresponding to a spiritual religion, a religion with spiritual objects, and which derives its life and vigour from spiritual and invisible things.

Now, suppose St. Paul desirous of spreading Christianity, had disregarded the fact, that it is a spiritual religion, has spiritual objects, and is only to be promoted by spiritual influence; and had called in the power of the Roman magistrate to his aid, thus acting in favour of Christianity, as before his conversion, while he was a persecuting zealot, he had acted against it; or having collected together the Christians who had believed, and arrayed them, as Mohammed afterward did his followers, in the arms of men, for the purpose of carrying on in this way the triumphs of Christianity; what would you have said of it? You would have thought him an impostor, as much as Mohammed himself; either ignorant of his religion, or of the manner in which such a religion should be promulgated and extended. You would have discovered a discrepancy between the means resorted to for the purpose of propagating the influence of this religion, and the true character and objects of the religion itself. I use this only for the sake of illustration: let us apply it to the matter before us.

There are many persons who see and acknowledge the necessity of gaining those spiritual victories to which alone the crown of life is promised; and therefore they begin to war what, in itself, is the "good warfare;" but they do not consider what kind of weapons they use, on what it is that they trust as the means of success. Perhaps they trust in their own native strength; but how does that correspond with the religion of which it is one of the first principles, that all our strength is but weakness, and that when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly? Others trust to the firmness of their own resolves; while this very religion tells them that, even in the early and first stage of gracious influence itself, which has brought them to acknowledge the excellence of the Divine law, when they would do good, evil is present with them. Others, again, trust to their increasing acquaintance with Christian doctrine; as if supposing that there is some secret charm in this knowledge which shall sanctify the heart and transform the character; yet St. Paul, when he tells us that "knowledge puffeth up," includes Christian knowledge; the knowledge of Divine truth, but separated from that which can alone give truth its saving efficacy. Then there are various means and ordinances of religion, which, when rightly considered as the means of approaching God,—by which a creature, who is all helplessness, comes to God, who is all fulness,—accomplish important effects, but still only as the channels of Divine grace. A man may think that there is a sort of moral and converting influence on the mind which these forms possess; and let me tell you, this is a very general

opinion; it is the opinion, in fact, of every man who does not hold the direct influence of God on the mind; yet this religion itself tells us that "bodily exercise profiteth little."

And then, as to the offensive part of the warfare, how many persons think they do well to be angry in God's cause, and bring bad passions, religious prejudices, and uncharitableness, to bear on the interests of Jesus Christ in the world! These are fighting Christians, indeed; armed, it is true, at all points; but not with "the armour of light;" for "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." And a man to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," must drink into the spirit of his Saviour's meekness and humility. So that we must take care that the instruments on which we depend for conquest in this moral warfare answer the character of our dispensation. The nature of the armour must correspond with the character of the dispensation. This is "armour of light;" man ceases from himself, derives new principles from God, depends on him constantly for the continual supply of grace, takes every virtue, without separating one from another, so as to fortify the whole; and by universal holiness, and universal zeal, by combining purity with his fervour, he is arrayed, offensively, with this Divine panoply.

III. I have to remark, in the last place, on the motives which should induce us to array ourselves in this armour.

1. The first motive is derived from a consideration of the degraded state of the man who is not invested with this armour; degraded at all times, but degraded more especially when the absence of all those principles which constitute the armour of light is the result of his own rejection of the truth and Gospel of Christ.

For,—to glance at the various parts of the armour,—what is a man without sincerity as to God, who professes a religion of subjection and love to him, and yet is continually, in the habits of his mind, and the course of his conduct, unmindful of him? He is a hypocrite, whom God will by and by expose. And what is a man without holiness, but an offensive sinner in the sight of God, whose case is deeply aggravated by the grace he rejects, the mercy he tramples under foot, the light against which he sins, and the very account he has to render, and which he so awfully neglects? And what is he who has not "the preparation of the Gospel of peace?" He may be in a better state than the one I have just spoken of; he may be a true penitent, and therefore the object of the Divine compassion; but still he is not reconciled to God; not a partaker, therefore, of the grace which is consequent upon reconciliation, and so not prepared for moral conquest. No man ought to rest satisfied short of a thorough experience of this peace, which the Gospel, a system of peace both between man and God, and man and his fellow, alone reveals. What is a man without the shield of faith? Every fiery dart strikes deep, and wounds dangerously. This is especially the case in reference to afflictions. Without this, the rebellious spirit is stirred up within him; gloom settles down upon it; and that which was designed kindly, as calculated to subdue, becomes the irritating cause of a thousand evils in his heart, which strike deeper root, and alienate him the more from God. What is a man without the hope of heaven? A poor earthly being that has no spiritual taste; a man that cares nothing about heaven, but as

it may be a refuge from hell; a poor, mean-spirited creature, whose tastes are only for that which this world can take from him, and seeks salvation only as a rescue from pain, but has no soul, so to speak, to anticipate the glories of God's eternal presence, and the high communications of his grace and salvation. What is a man without "the sword of the Spirit;" a good and practical acquaintance with the word of God; with the habit of judiciously applying and resting upon it? He goes to his warfare utterly unprepared either for defence or attack. He judges of every thing by an imperfect or false standard, and perhaps puts good for evil, and evil for good; in the day of temptation he must fall; he is carried about with every wind of doctrine; all the little errors and ridiculous absurdities that arise in the religious world occupy his attention, fill his mouth with useless conversation, and his heart with unprofitable speculation; he becomes like those whose characters are described by Jude, as clouds carried about with the wind, which have no water, and as trees dead, having no fruit.

Now, brethren, you see the degradation of the man in his moral condition and character, who is practically unconnected with those principles which constitute "the armour of light." Do you need a more powerful argument to induce you, in the strength of God, to listen to the exhortation of the apostle? If you do, think,

2. Of the moral elevation which this armour gives to every one who is invested with it.

And let me tell you, that this moral elevation is one great end of our life, and ought to be the grand object of our ambition. This is a species of ambition, and the only one, that is pure and acceptable to God. The ambition of being distinguished among men, of standing high in the opinion of the world, is from beneath, and not from the Father, and will always tend to the grovelling source from which it springs; but the grace of God, from its first commencement in the soul, kindles a noble ambition in the soul to rise higher and higher in the scale of moral attainment. The very first spark of grace tends to increase; lays hold of every thing that would feed its fire; it spreads into a flame, attempts to mount and enlarge, and attain a higher brightness. That was the ambition of St. Paul: forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth to those that were before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And he exhorts us, to the same purpose, to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which most easily besets us; and to run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus." For this he pours out his most earnest prayers; and he reminds us, that "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish:" a state this which we must attain on earth, and therefore the great object for which we ought to live.

And, brethren, these principles cannot truly exist, cannot live and grow in us, without carrying us up constantly to a still higher conformity to the image and will of this glorious Saviour. What are the parts of this armour? Just enumerate them again, that you may see the moral glory with which they invest man. "Truth;" such a con-

sciousness of sincerity, that man, humbled as he may be by various considerations, can yet put himself under the eye of the Omniscient himself, and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." "Righteousness;" which shuns the appearance of evil, which becomes a habit, an appetite of the soul; so that the man hungers and thirsts after yet more, that so he may be filled; and looks at no lower an attainment than the mind that was in Christ, that the disciple may be as his Lord. Thus, a conscious "peace" with God, which shall express itself in acts of filial confidence, and habitual access to him, so that there shall be an abiding of the soul in his presence, and a dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty. Thus, a "hope" which spurns every thing low and earthly, because it is far beneath its aim; which looks at the glorious prize, and has this peculiarity about it, as the grand characteristic of true Christian hope, that it leads man to aim at no less than a Divine model of purity; for "he that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as he also is pure." The object of the man's hope is to see God, to be in his immediate presence, accepted of him, and embraced by the everlasting arms of mercy; and therefore the hope which delights in the prospect of this glory, and aspires after its possession, must lead to the cultivation of personal and complete holiness. Then there is "faith," which leads us to turn from all those discouraging appearances which surround us, because of the number and strength of our adversaries; which looks at the faithfulness of God, and realizes the scenes at present invisible; brings an eternal world into this, and makes us live as citizens of it, purifying our hearts, and forming our characters according to the Divine will. And then, knowledge of the "word of God," which feeds the soul continually with high thoughts, thoughts worthy of the loftiest mind, and which at once raise the intellect, afford it the noblest occupation, and call forth, in their liveliest energy and influence, and to their highest exercise, all those pure and enlarged affections which Christianity plants in the soul; so that, acquainted with the designs and counsels of God, we walk not by the feeble, flickering lights of human opinion, but "in the light of the Lord." And for this pure and exalted exercise was the soul of man formed, just as the human eye was designed, not to be occupied by any merely artificial light, but to take in the light of heaven, and expatiate on the glorious scenes in the world that surrounds us, which that light makes visible. Brethren, this is true moral greatness. And observe, that as this constitutes the true glory of man, so it loses nothing of its loftiness and splendour, but both are heightened, because the praise of all belongs to God; for what greater honour can be put on any man, than that God himself should condescend to work in him "all the good pleasure of his goodness?" to create him anew in Christ Jesus, to restore him to his own lost image, and thus prepare him for dwelling in his sacred presence for ever and ever?

3. Finally remember that you must either conquer or be conquered, and thus live in the slavery of what the apostle elsewhere, referring to this warfare, calls "principalities and powers," all wicked spirits; thus called "principalities and powers," because they rule over all pagan, all anti-Christian, all infidel empires, and because they have dominion over the mass of mankind, over all ungodly men, and because there is

not a soul of man free from their galling, their degrading influence, but the soul that is rescued by Jesus Christ, and clothed by him with the armour of light.

Will you, then, prefer the reign of these "spiritual wickednesses" over you, whose only object is first to deceive, and then to destroy you, to the reign of God, the inward kingdom of Christ, "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" "Choose you this day whom you will serve." If you are not clad with "the armour of light," and thus going on from victory to victory, you are "led captive by Satan at his will;" and the chains you thus refuse to cast away, must bind your soul in the blackness of darkness for ever. If you pant to be delivered from this slavery, and to be conquerors where now you are overcome, then seek to Him who was sent to preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. And being liberated by Him, remember what is enjoined upon you, that you "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." "The armour of light" is from heaven. You must be invested with it by God, and by him strengthened for its use, that so you may "war a good warfare." Happy are you, if you are already engaged in it! Trust in God, and be faithful to his word, that "having done all," after the last combat, you may still stand, be found still erect, still conqueror, that so Christ may say to you, "It is enough; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." God grant us all this grace! Amen.

SERMON CXVI.—*Love to Christ.*

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" John xxi, 17.

AT first sight this appears a singular question proposed to Peter. He had denied his Lord. You would expect that when he met with his Lord, his Lord would have expostulated with him, reproved him, and asked whether or not he had repented. But no: "Lovest thou me?" is the inquiry proposed. How strangely it strikes us! Thou cowardly denier of thy Lord, "lovest thou me?" But, my brethren, Jesus had no need to ask Peter whether he had repented. He had "turned and looked upon Peter;" and Peter's heart broke: he "went out and wept bitterly." But his Lord had no need to be informed of that; he had seen all by virtue of his omniscience. He had seen the former affection of Peter to his Master return with a full tide. He who knew all things knew that Peter loved him; and he put the question three times to give Peter an opportunity of thrice declaring it in the presence of his fellow disciples. The kindness of our Lord to Peter is affecting; but the moral of it extends to us. When our Lord asks a disciple three times whether he loves him, and puts him upon examining his heart, he teaches us that to love Christ is essential to our discipleship; and he gives to love the same eminence which it has always held among angels and men. It is "the first and great commandment." Brethren, let us be well aware of the necessity of this supreme love to Christ; let us recollect that, without it, we are but as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal;" and let it be our care to cul-

tivate it as the first and vital principle of religion, and to guard it as the richest gem of religious experience.

Supreme love to Christ is our subject. I shall direct your attention,

I. To the reasons on which our obligation to love Christ rests.

II. To the great office of this grace in experimental and practical religion.

I. The reason on which our obligation to love Christ rests.

An affection which is so enjoined, and which holds the first place in religion, rests upon the most cogent reasons.

1. The first is, the supreme excellency of the object, Christ.

We are under even a kind of natural obligation to love that which is excellent. We are certainly under a moral one, to "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good." In Christ all good meets; it exists in absolute perfection, and can have no addition. And here we speak not so much of his glories as seen in his Godhead,—they are too dazzling for us to approach near to them,—but of their manifestation as tempered by passing through the veil of his pure humanity.

Do the condescensions of superior wisdom attract us? In him we see the wisdom of God, speaking "face to face" to man, in words clear as the light of the intelligence from which they proceeded, and embodying itself in metaphor and parable, or in plain and convincing speech, that no means might be left untried to convey the instruction to the heart.

Are we affected by disinterested benevolence? Behold his life of labour; his stupendous miracles of compassion, given freely, without an exacted return, by him who chose still to say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Does humility, connected with great virtues and great actions, command the homage of the heart? It was said of him, "He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." Many of his works were public, in order to be evidences of his mission: otherwise he said, "See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Let God be praised in his own sanctuary, but call not forth the applause of unthinking men.

Is there a charm in the noble passion of patriotism? Does the man who lives, suffers, and dies for his country, win the heart? Does the heart respond to his deserved eulogies? For his country our Lord lived. To turn his countrymen from their iniquities, and the ruin consequent upon them, all his patient labours were directed; and when he saw them incorrigible, he "drew nigh to the" perverse "city, and wept over it." Yet, after all, his heart clings to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and though the offer is to be made to all nations, yet, "Begin," says he to his apostles, with forgiving tenderness, "begin at Jerusalem."

Does friendship move us? Think of the family of Bethany; the disciple whom Jesus loved; and his kind and sympathetic regards for the whole body of his disciples.

All moral virtues were in him. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled." And all the stronger virtues of religion; such as meekness,

patience, resignation, devotion. All that he taught, all that we, alas ! so often see afar off, and apparently inaccessible, lives, and breathes, and glows in him.

Here, then, is a reason for an affection as strong and unbounded as the supreme excellence of the character to which it is attached.

2. The second reason for this supremacy of love is the generous interposition of our Lord in the great work of our redemption.

Frequently as we advert to this topic, yet it is ever new. The apostle brings it before us, when he says, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. v, 7, 8. And St. John exclaims, "Hercin is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John iv, 10. The sentiment is, our unworthiness in contrast with a generous, suffering love. How true are both parts ! What is in us such grace to move ? Our nature is corrupt, unthankful. Take every thing from man which he owes not to converting grace, and what a monster of vice he appears ! Yet the Lord forgets the sinner, and thinks only of the creature ; he forgets the prodigality of the son, and thinks only of his misery. O how truly this is love ! to pass over all that might create aversion, and to fix upon something which may excite and justify affection ; a creature lost, a child reduced to vagrancy and penury. So generous was the interposition of Christ, when he offered himself to the stroke, and brought us into his own redeeming hand by his own passion.

And now, brethren, what a ground is here laid for love ! Had any one interposed, at the risk of his own life, to rescue ours, and that in some specially generous manner, we could never see or hear of him without emotion. Our hearts would warm ; and the grateful affection would rise. Were our country rescued from invasion, and pillage, and tyranny, by the long struggle of some heroic patriot, exposing himself to hardship and to peril, we should never be wearied with his praises. All ranks would go out to meet him. All would be jealous of his honour. This is a principle in nature. There are many such characters. They live in the eye of nations. Youthful and aged hearts beat while reading their history ; and we should think our hearts treacherous to human nature itself, if we did not consent that they should be loved and honoured through succeeding times.

Ah ! how faint are these representations of the devotion of our Saviour to our cause ! Shrouding his glory in humanity, willingly scoffed at and persecuted, the day witnessed his labours ; and cold mountains, and the midnight air, witnessed his prayers for us. Why was he mocked ? That we might be honoured. Why condemned ? That we might be justified. Why died he ? That we might live. O boundless love ! Ours, blessed Saviour, can never equal thine. But not to love thee with all our powers, would be black and monstrous ingratitude.

3. A third reason for this supremacy of affection to Christ, is the benefits which we are constantly receiving from his hands.

It is, indeed, impossible to think of Christ without having some relation in which our highest interest is connected presented to our thoughts. His names attest this : "Jesus," "Redeemer," "Christ."

The offices to which he was anointed attest it: Is he a Prophet? He still teaches by his word and Spirit. Is he a Priest? "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Is he a King? He rules angels, that they may minister to us; the world, for the preservation and extension of the religion which is our light and life; he rules our affairs in mercy; and devils, that even they may befriend us. Every object and state reminds us of his love.

Do we think of life? We owe it to his intercession. Of ordinary mercies? They are the fruits of his redemption; for we deserve nothing. Of the ordinances? They are visitations of his grace.

Do we regard the future as well as the present? We expect his kingdom. Do we anticipate death? We have the victory by him. Judgment? We have justification through his blood. What, then, can we plead beside? Do we think of heaven? We view him as the grand source of light, love, and joy. Should constant benefits excite love? Then surely our love ought to be constant. Should benefits of the highest kind excite the highest love? Then our love ought to be supreme. And are they never to cease? Then ought our love to be eternal.

I have showed you the reasons which demand, not only that we should love Christ, but that we should love him supremely.

We proceed,

II. To consider the great office of this grace in experimental and practical religion.

1. It is this which gives the true character to evangelical obedience.

None but this is acceptable and rewardable. Man is in three states: unawakened, penitent, believing. In the first he can have no love to Christ, because he loves the world, and is without the Spirit, by whose influence alone this affection can be created in us. In the second he has no love, because he has the "fear which hath torment." In the third, only, he loves, because he knows that God loves him, and that his "love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him." From this principle obedience derives its character. In unawakened man some acts of obedience may be apparent; but these may spring from natural temperament, in which there is no more virtue than it is virtue in a dove to be innocent, in a lamb to be meek, in an ox to be patient. The man's temptation does not lie that way. Or they may spring from a respect to man's opinion; in which case they have their reward. Or even from Pharisaism, a wish and hope to merit something at the hand of God. In the penitent there is the obedience of the slave: in the believer obedience is filial, he delights in it; his love is the "fulfilling of the law," it makes difficult things easy, and God graciously accepts what is done for his name's sake. Love, then, gives, through Christ, a rewardable obedience.

2. It is the great instrument of high and holy attainments.

It produces trust, as that reciprocally produces love; it produces prayer, and so receives blessings from God; it produces the love of every thing that is like Christ, all holy thoughts and objects of meditation, which shed their sanctity upon the soul, and transform us, while we gaze upon them, into their own image. Holiness is the element of love; and it bears the soul into it.

3. It is the grand antagonist principle of the love of the world.

The Apostle John has put them in opposition : "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii, 15. They cannot co-exist. If we love Christ supremely, we cannot so love the world as that it shall chill our affections, encrust our hearts, or destroy the fine sensibility which thrills at the very sound of our Saviour's name; nor can we so desire it as to suffer dissatisfaction if disappointed. We shall still find our chief good in God: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."

If we love Christ supremely, we shall never so seek credit among men as to make a sacrifice of conscience and character to attain it; we shall be satisfied with the "honour that cometh from God."

If we love Christ, we shall utterly distaste the world's pleasures, and be mercifully saved from these enervating vanities. And here I must warn you against the dissipations and follies of the coming week,* and class the whole among those worldly pleasures to which the love of Christ stands directly opposed. If it were a simple ball or concert, I should have no need to guard you; but as the snare comes baited with pretences to charity, and sacred music, it is laid by the world to entrap; and I shall do my part to counteract it. The thing is to be considered as a whole; and as far as sanction goes, it cannot be divided: it is "the festival." The professed object is, the charities of the town; that is, a farthing in every shilling being expended on these, the eleven pence three farthings go to the purchase of musical and other gratifications; yet the whole is hypocritically masked with the name of charity. Then we have the first act of this festival: there is the place, a church; there are the prayers, which I fear, will be thought very long; and there is a sermon, which, to be popular, must be very short, to make a way for the amusement of sacred music. What is this music? The Redeemer's sufferings, his very groans and sobs in the garden, are imitated; and the chorus of angels at his resurrection mimicked on fiddle strings; the clangour of the archangel's trump, by the trumpets of the orchestra; and the triumphs of the resurrection and of heaven, by the imitative choruses of men on earth. Then we have the performers; priests and priestesses of that temple of Satan, the theatre; from which more moral evil flows than perhaps from any other single source. These are hired to sing such subjects; to imitate the sacrificial wailings of my blessed Lord, and to play upon catgut the sorrows which redeemed the world.

Then comes the second act, a concert of profane music. Last comes that grotesque assembly which mocks reason, with its midnight hours, and all the dissipation which comes in at the close. This is the whole: what think you of it? What will love to Christ—pure love, jealous of his honour, sympathizing with the souls of men—feel concerning it? Can it bear that the sufferings and glory of the Saviour should be turned into an amusement? For if a few individuals of a different mind be there, this is the case as to the majority. Will it pay its money to hire profane lips to sing his praises? Will it bear that to be called "sacred" which is but a lure to lead on to scenes which must dishonour him? Will it sympathize no more with souls,

* This sermon was preached at Grosvenor-street chapel, Manchester, on the Sunday preceding a musical festival and fancy ball in that town.—EDIT.

redeemed by his blood, than to be a party to that which shall convence together a mass of ignorant and vicious people, to stimulate one another to acts of dissipation and levity? No, it cannot bear this; it weeps over it; it is righteously indignant at it; and it flies from, or lies wounded and bleeding in, every bosom which may be seduced by the folly. Love to Christ is a true test of our pleasures; it flies from every thing which cannot be done to the honour of Christ.

4. Supreme love to Christ is the root and nutriment of charity to man.

Read the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. This beautiful state of mind, comprehending all kind and holy affections, it is the office of the love of Christ to produce.

5. It removes terrors from futurity.

Futurity discloses the world where Jesus is. That is enough; that is the heaven of heavens to a Christian; and hence "his desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better."

And now, my brethren, in conclusion,

1. Answer faithfully this question of Christ, "Lovest thou me?"

You love him not if you break his commandments, neglect his ordinances, take pleasure in sin, stand aloof from his people, and are indifferent to the spread of his truth, and the advancement of his glory. If this is your character, then the sad truth is out: you love not Christ. Be humbled for your base ingratitude; be alarmed for the consequences of your sin; and flee to the appointed remedy. Seek the pardon of your sin through the death and intercession of Him whom you have so long neglected; and a new nature from the influence of that Spirit which he is exalted to give.

2. Do you, can you say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?"

Yet my love is not equal to my desire! Cherish this holy principle by meditation, by prayer, by the devout reading of the holy Scriptures, and attendance upon every Christian ordinance; thus stir up within you that gift of God, till love to Christ becomes the ruling passion, and is stronger than even death itself.

SERMON CXVII.—*The Importance of Religious Knowledge.*

"And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation," Isa. xxxiii, 6.

THESE words are connected with a section of prophecy which extends to the fiftieth chapter. Primarily, it seems to have been spoken of Hezekiah, of the happiness and security which the Jews experienced under his reign,—a reign which was evidently blessed of God to their good; but, like many other predictions, it has a larger application. It refers to the kingdom of Messiah; to the blessings resulting from the reign of Christ over his redeemed people. "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of

a great rock in a weary land." That part of the prediction contained in the text declares, that, in the time of the Messiah, there should be a diffusion of knowledge so wide and efficacious, that society should be rendered stable and tranquil by it; that this wisdom and knowledge should produce salvation, or deliverance from temporal and spiritual calamities; and that this salvation should be a strong one. This has been already in part fulfilled, but still only in part. When the Messiah came into the world, he brought with him "wisdom and knowledge." He brought them in larger degrees, and in a more perfect form, than the world had ever before possessed. He had dwelt with the Father. He knew him, and testified of him. It was in reference to the extensive and glorious manner in which the world's darkness was scattered by him, that he is called, "the Light of the world;" and the latest of the prophets, when speaking of him, predicts his coming, under the figure of "the Sun of righteousness," rising on the nations, "with healing in his wings." And as Christianity thus introduced religious light, so did that light become the parent of every other kind of useful and excellent knowledge. When once the powers of the human mind are brought into acquaintance with evangelical truth, they acquire vigour, a strength and expansion in their exercise before unknown. And hence it is that the knowledge which the revealed truth of God communicates will be found in all ages to produce that discipline of mind which ministers so much to its strength, and places it in the most favourable circumstances for the discovery and acquisition of truth generally. It was true knowledge which the Messiah came into the world to inculcate and establish. There are, indeed, ages which for their ignorance and darkness have been emphatically called the dark ages; but that ignorance and darkness are not in any degree to be attributed to Christianity. The religion of Christ never extinguished a single light needed by man for the guidance of his steps. These dark ages were in a great measure occasioned by the irruption of barbarous and pagan nations, who were permitted to devastate Christendom. A mass of ignorance was thus heaped over the truths of the Gospel; but those truths became the leaven which leavened the lump, and have so greatly altered its character. It is owing to the vigorous and active spirit of Christianity, that the Vandal invaders of Europe have been themselves subdued. The torch was hidden, but not extinguished. So little opposition, in fact, is there between Christianity and true science, that all the most important discoveries of a scientific nature, all the knowledge whence nations derive power and refinement, have occurred in Christian nations, and Christian nations only. This is so generally acknowledged, that it seems to have become an almost universal opinion, among thinking men, that the religion of Christ must be favourable to knowledge of every useful kind; and hence, perhaps the general acknowledgment, that it is only from the diffusion of wisdom and knowledge that we can expect settled and tranquil times. So much is this now believed, that almost every project for the advancement of society begins and ends with it. Almost every body now admits the principle which enjoins education on all ranks of society, and connects the dissemination of knowledge with the purified and elevated morality of individuals, and the improvement of the condition of nations. There is no real error in this. Thus

far we are sure we are right. The principle itself is true and just, and, if carried on in a right direction, cannot be pressed too far. It has, indeed, often been stated too broadly; in terms too general to be in every sense true. We must guard against this, else we shall not only experience disappointment ourselves, and that, too, where our anticipations had been most pleasing, but engage in schemes as injurious in fact, as perhaps they were benevolent in design. We ought to be aware, that we are in danger of error, even when employed in the pursuit of truth; and it is very possible that from the very ardour of the pursuit, we may break out of the course, or shoot beyond the goal. I am so persuaded of this myself,—namely, that even this just and important principle has been stated too broadly; that there are very crude, and incorrect, and even mischievous, notions upon it,—that I have had it frequently on my mind to make it the subject of a public discourse. I shall now embrace the opportunity of doing this. I shall take the present opportunity of saying, and of endeavouring to prove, to you, that there appears no real connection between mere scientific knowledge and moral influence; that the opinion, that such a connection exists, is false in its foundations, and injurious in practice. For instance, we hear it asserted, that between moral improvement and knowledge there is a direct connection; but we are not told what knowledge is meant. Assuming that knowledge, merely as knowledge, is meant, then the argument does not hold good. The proposition which I shall endeavour to establish is, that no moral influence is exerted, except by the truths revealed to us in the Scriptures; and that whatever effects are produced by knowledge of any other kind, those effects do not constitute a real moral improvement, either of society or of individuals. The evils of ignorance are admitted to be great; but so are the evils of unsanctified knowledge likewise. These latter evils, indeed, are closely connected with the evils of ignorance; for what are they, but the evils which flow from ignorance of the truth which makes man wise unto salvation? That is the real source from which they spring.

In order that we may come to a just decision on this subject, I shall,

I. Appeal to the supreme authority of Scripture.

II. Point out the manner in which religious knowledge operates to the production of moral results.

III. Show that by no other species of knowledge can such a moral influence be exerted. And,

IV. Lastly, endeavour to give a practical direction to the whole.

I. I am, in the first place, to make an appeal to the authority of Scripture, in support of the proposition, that we have no right to expect any moral improvement from the influence of any kind of knowledge except that of Divine truth.

Do not mistake me. It ought to be stated, that this sacred book is altogether in favour of the cultivation of all useful knowledge, and its general circulation through society. One wonders at any objection having been made to the diffusion of knowledge by persons even professing the least reverence for the inspired volume. The Old Testament is favourable to knowledge. There is one view of the Mosaic institute not often taken, but which I think is very important in refer-

ence to the case before us. When God made the Jews a peculiar people, and constituted himself their Sovereign,—their Sovereign, not merely as their Creator, but as their political Head,—it was evidently his design to exhibit to all nations an example of government, not in the detail, perhaps, but in the grand principle. The manner in which God governed the Jews furnishes an example to all earthly governments; and the manner in which the Jews were called to obey shows us the manner in which men generally are called to obey the just laws of their own country. And then there was the moral law, in which the fundamental bases of all jurisprudence are exhibited to all nations.—Now, the obedience required from the Jews was not to be ignorant and blind; the empire of God among them was founded for their intellectual improvement; every parent was specially enjoined diligently to teach his children both the laws and statutes which God had given, and the historical occurrences with which they were connected; that so they might be, in the sight of all nations, a wise and understanding people. And so it is with the Christian revelation. Evangelists give the narrative of the facts of the Saviour's history, and record his instructive conversations and discourses: apostles not only state, but illustrate and prove, the great doctrines and duties of religion, and call on the disciples to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom. Neither the Mosaic nor the Christian religion was founded in ignorance.

We turn again to the Old Testament. We are there expressly required to view religion as wisdom. "Wisdom," we are told, "is the principal thing;" and it is urged upon us that we "get wisdom," yea, that "with all our getting, we get understanding." When the attainment of wisdom is thus inculcated and enjoined, we may well inquire, "What kind of wisdom is it to which so many moral effects are ascribed?" I reply, that it is not to scientific wisdom, but to moral wisdom: to the knowledge of God and his will; to the knowledge of our own obligations and duties; to the knowledge which applies to man as an accountable creature, destined to a future judgment; to the knowledge of the way in which man, as a sinner, may find pardon, and peace, and holiness from God, whom he has offended. All this is included in the Scriptural idea of wisdom; and it is to this only that moral results are ascribed. Take a few passages: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." "Behold, the fear of the Lord," said Job, after inquiring, "Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?"—after making all nature say, "It is not to be found here,"—"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." And especially mark that saying of the wise man, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee; to deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; to deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words: that thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it." These, and a thousand other passages of Scripture, prove my position, that where any moral influence is ascribed to wisdom in the Old Testament, it is the true knowledge of God that is to be understood, and that only. And we

find the same sentiment in the New Testament. Jesus Christ never drops a word from which it might be gathered that mere knowledge, knowledge of any and every kind, is sufficient to exert a moral influence on the mind and character. On the contrary, there are passages in which he represents it as operating to the hinderance of salvation. So that solemn declaration in Matthew: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." And so in the writings of the apostles. The Gospel, which gives moral knowledge, they declare to be "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" while of the wisdom of the world, so long tried among the heathen, they only declare that "the world by wisdom knew not God." When St. Paul points to the injurious effects of "philosophy and vain deceit," he tells us that he means that which is "after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of this world, and not after Christ." Such philosophy could not be depended upon to conquer a single vice, or implant a single principle of virtue, and therefore he pronounces it to be but vain deceit, empty and powerless. Not one single intimation do we find that mere human knowledge, natural science, is capable of producing a substantial and consistent moral improvement.

II. Let us now consider the manner by which religious knowledge operates to produce these moral results.

That such results are produced will appear,

1. From the truths which it presents to the mind.

It sets God before us in all the attributes which belong to him, and in the relations in which he stands to ourselves; it presents him to us as the Creator of all things, and as having the absolute right to dispose and govern them as he sees fit; as being in every place, so that we are, both in heart and life, continually under the notice of his eye; as absolutely holy, manifesting his holiness in the law by which all that is unholy is forbidden, all that is pure and right enjoined. Religious knowledge brings before us the justice of God, as illustrated in his government of the world, inflicting his anger on the wicked, and setting his favour on the righteous. His mercy in Christ Jesus is presented before us, recommending himself to the confidence and love of guilty man, before whom he thus sets an open door of salvation. Religious knowledge sets before us the true character of man, and calls and enables us to know ourselves. We see him as an accountable being, on trial for eternity. After the present life God shall sit in judgment upon him; and, by that judgment, shall all men have their condition fixed, in endless woe, or everlasting happiness. Consider the impressive nature of such truths as these; contrast them with the truths which human science presents. Do you not see that religious knowledge comes with a direct and powerful bearing upon our conscience? It takes hold of our hopes and fears. But what natural science refers to the conscience? What objects of human knowledge associate themselves with our hopes or fears as to the future? Then,

2. The law of God presents a standard of duty, binding on the conscience; for there can be no authoritative standard of right and wrong except by revelation from God himself, the supreme Lawgiver.

For this purpose is the book of God given to us; and the knowledge which it communicates furnishes a rule by which to judge of every

course of conduct; a rule, too, which is of universal extent, and easy of application. All the characters exhibited in this book are recorded and described in reference to moral purposes; they are intended to recommend the good, or to deter us from the evil. Then we have in our Lord Jesus Christ a living example of all holiness; he embodied in himself all that is excellent in spirit, temper, and conduct, thus giving a visible expression to all the principles scattered through the Scriptures for our instruction. In the word of God you have express directions for the government of your life, so furnished as to be applicable to all the various circumstances in which man can be placed. Religious knowledge, therefore, the wisdom derived from revelation, is the knowledge of an authoritative standard of right and wrong. And in the Bible alone have we such a standard. We find it not in other branches of knowledge; on whatever other subject they instruct us, they instruct us not in true morals. Nor can they affect the conscience, whose very existence supposes religious knowledge, without which there could never have been any conscience in the world. When we speak of conscience, we have a real, though it should be an unexpressed reference to the existence and perfections of God, to his will concerning us, to our own accountableness, and to a future state of rewards and punishments. The very notion of conscience implies all this. It is, then, only by religious knowledge that the mind can be brought into this state. Now, all moral influence refers to the conscience; and all attempts at producing moral improvement without the aid of conscience must fail; all kinds of knowledge, therefore, which exert no power on the conscience, must leave the life unreformed; and every experiment in which we attempt to produce moral results, without the intervention of religious knowledge bearing directly on the conscience, must issue in failure and disappointment.

Nor must we forget another thing. We have appealed to the Scriptures. Now, these assure us that along with the truth of God there goes an accompanying influence; the words that are spoken to you are "spirit and life." This is because the illuminations of the Holy Ghost go along with them. We may not overlook the fallen state of man; he is dead in trespasses and sins. The very law is weak through the flesh; it gives direction, but it cannot give life. The Spirit must convince men of sin and righteousness; and if he be removed, the Agent is taken away by whom only our moral renovation can be effected. Now, this blessed, this mighty Spirit only works on our hearts in connection with his own revealed truth; it is not with human science that he works for the amendment of our principles and tempers. He testifies of the Saviour, and can only be received by the faith which cometh by the word of God. Worldly knowledge comes to the heart with no power; but with the truth of God, with religious knowledge, there is the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, the Spirit of wisdom, and power, and of a sound mind. All who properly and fully embrace the truth of God receive the Spirit of God, and so do they become "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

All these considerations show us how direct as well as powerful is the moral influence which results from religious knowledge, and the habit of carefully attending to the truth of God. I mean not to say, even, that the accompanying Spirit renders this knowledge so vivid and

powerful as that it necessarily operates on all, and to its full extent; but I do mean that its power is such that, wherever it comes, it uniformly moralizes man. It moralizes the nations where it is preached, even when it does not convert all who dwell in them; it checks ten thousand evils; it discovers the deformity of vice, and makes men ashamed of it, and thus gradually, but certainly, advances and elevates the moral condition of society at large. And these, though among its lowest effects, are yet of no slight value. But it does more. Carefully applied by a religious education, and by the faithful ministry of the word, it becomes the power of God to the salvation of the soul from sin to holiness; and all who are thus saved become, by their holy example, instrumental in raising the tone of public feeling, and purifying the domestic, social, and national morals of the country.

III. I must be more brief in my third proposition; which goes to show you that by no other species of knowledge than that which we have been considering, can this moral influence be exerted.

1. Though many seem to take for granted that if we circulate knowledge, we improve society, it is nevertheless true that there are many kinds of knowledge which do not contribute to the improvement of morals.

In fact, when we consider the subject, we must see that nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that any but religious knowledge can exert a moral influence. No branch of physical science even professes to teach the knowledge of God, or to govern and enlighten the conscience. These are points to which mere worldly knowledge does not even pretend to refer; and he, therefore, who expects a moral result from it, looks for an effect without a cause: as well might a man expect to become a skilful botanist by studying astronomy. To improve the morals of a man, I must give him moral instruction; but this is what no branch of human science even professes to do. We take nothing from the just value of science by confining it to its proper objects. One science only can improve your morals, even that Divine philosophy which describes, with authority, the manner of life to which God, your Sovereign and your Judge, requires you to conform.

2. If this does not produce conviction, I observe still farther, that all experience is against the supposition I am combating.

You can at once see the connection between religious knowledge and morality; but between morality and any other knowledge you see no connection whatever. What connection is there between the knowledge of mechanics and morality? What moral duty have you impressed on the conscience when you have taught the man to make a table? So with the knowledge of numbers, or the knowledge of languages, whether ancient or modern. In none of these sciences is there any principle that can connect itself with moral feeling; and therefore I again say, all experience is against it. The Gospel was first preached, beyond the limits of the Jewish Church, to a very refined, but to a very immoral, people. Even with what they had learned from tradition, the wisest among them—I may not even except Socrates—could contemplate with perfect indifference, and even practise, the most abominable vices. The same results are found in our own day. Wherever infidelity prevails we witness the decay and destruction of moral principle. We may find, perhaps, some excep-

tions in Christian countries; but let us see how they are produced, and we shall find that they prove the rule. They proceed from awe of public opinion; from a feeling of shame with regard to personal honour and character. But what provides that standard whose elevated purity men thus practically acknowledge, even while they reject its source? What is it that makes vice shameful, so that even the respectable infidel blushes to be suspected of its commission? Where infidelity prevails this is not so; it is only found where infidelity is the exception, and religious truth prevails. It is this book, it is the faithful preaching of the Gospel, which so keeps up the standard of public opinion that even infidels are obliged to acknowledge its authority. Even among our peasants who have been carefully instructed in religious truth,—men without a single ray of science,—we find the practice of all the Christian virtues; while, too often, we see the brightest beams of human philosophy gilding and giving splendour to baseness and corruption.

3. But let us even suppose that morals are taught. What then?

I am aware that there are often some moral instructions added to systems of education; some moral precepts in which all will agree are, perhaps, even selected from the book of God; still, if this book be true, even such teaching must fail. This book has its doctrines and promises, as well as its moral precepts; and its morals are connected most intimately both with its doctrines and promises. Man must be taught not only what is right, but why it is right; and he must be shown that he is bound to do it. The term “duty” refers not merely to the action which is to be done, but to the obligation to do it. Take, then, the morality of the Bible away from that with which God has connected it, and you make it powerless. Moral influence and power come only from the whole truth of God. Do you ask why? I ask you, Was it necessary we should have a revelation at all? If we could have done without it, it had not been given to us. If it were necessary for God to give us all that he has given, then is it necessary that the whole be brought to bear upon our conscience: God has not done a superfluous work. And yet we charge him thus foolishly, if we say that the true science of morals can be taught, say by extracts and selections from the book of Proverbs. All this may be good so far as it goes, and provided other means are united with this for the purpose of unfolding the whole system of Divine truth which the Scriptures contain. It is the whole truth of God which he himself sanctions and blesses to the production of a saving acquaintance with himself. All the great principles of revealed religion must be taught; our duty toward God must be brought forward, as well as our duty to our neighbour; and both in connection with repentance, faith, and holiness. The whole truth of God must be declared if we desire to produce true moral feeling in the soul.

IV. Having made these observations on the general subject, I shall conclude by a few practical remarks, which will serve to show you more fully what has been my object.

1. Whatever information any of you may obtain,—and I wish not to check your desire of useful information, such desires are praiseworthy; it is easy to see that the Bible itself is not addressed to the sluggishly ignorant, whose heart is waxed fat, and who seeing, see not; who

hearing, hear not; but to the thoughtful, the industrious, who are willing to search for wisdom as for hidden treasures;—but whatever information you may seek, and even obtain, you cannot expect to be morally bettered by your studies unless you make the religion of Christ the object of your serious and attentive regard.

You must not even study religion as a mere science, mistaking this new direction of your taste for a something which will render you more acceptable to God: fall not into this mistake. God communicates salvation to man only by our Lord Jesus; and through the knowledge of him must you seek it, if you would find it. O yes; that has been our own case, if we be indeed heirs of eternal life: we have come to God as utterly ignorant, till himself teaches us; guilty, till he pardons us; enslaved, till he brings us into the liberty of his children; and without hope, till he gives us the “good hope through grace.”

2. Another practical consequence will bring before us the duty of parents.

That duty is not exhausted by their anxiety—however praiseworthy in itself—to have their children instructed in useful knowledge, according to the rank they hold in society. Every kind of useful and ornamental learning which comports with their situation should, as far as possible, be granted them; but a prior and more important duty is found, that command so carefully enjoined on all Israelitish parents, “Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children.” I confess I am not surprised at the great tendency to infidelity which we too often perceive in young persons. When I reflect on the great neglect of religious education, and on the exclusion of the Bible from many schools, I only wonder that these tendencies are not more general and powerful. I would be thankful that error makes no greater ravages among our youth, sent out into the world, as too many of them are, without this shield of truth. But guard against this yourselves. Train up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; carefully receive and act upon this principle, that no moral influence can be exerted upon the heart and life but by means of the book of God; recollect, that without the truth of God, a state of ignorance and of information are alike—though in different ways—productive of evil. Were all this thoroughly believed, society would soon both experience and exhibit the benefit.

Connected with this will be the remark, that you may thus see how your Sunday schools should be conducted. I have sometimes feared lest these should be removed from the great principle in which they at first began. Their great object is the communication of religious knowledge to the neglected children of the poor. Every where, it is true, but in Sunday schools especially so,—if you wish them not to be mischievous instead of useful,—“wisdom is the principal thing;” therefore teach wisdom, and, with all your teaching, teach understanding.

3. Finally,—that I may detain you no longer:—recollect even religious knowledge does not operate necessarily.

You must carefully peruse the word of God; and this must be with much prayer, that it may be applied to your conscience, that it may be in you as good seed on good ground. Acquire the habit of devout reflection on Divine and eternal things; let the truths of God be ever

present to your mind ; but forget not that you need light and power from above. You must ask wisdom from God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ; thus shall you walk in safety. The instruction which you receive from the word of God shall be rendered efficacious and sanctifying by the Spirit of God ; and your wills shall be rectified, your affections purified, and your footsteps being thus ordered in his word, no iniquity shall have dominion over you.

SERMON CXVIII.—*The Ministry of John the Baptist.*

“I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Esaias,” John i, 23.

THESE are the words of John the Baptist, uttered when “the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not ; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Esaias.”

The reference to the prophecy of Isaiah is made short, because it was addressed to men who were familiar with it. The passage in full is, “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low : and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain : and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” Isa. xl. 3-5.

Thus eminently was the Baptist a subject of prophecy : thus explicitly did he apply these prophecies to himself ; and we may add, thus unequivocally were they fulfilled in him.

Let us,

I. Generally survey the preparatory mission of the Baptist.

II. Point out the principal lessons in which it instructs us.

I. The mission of John was strictly preparatory and temporary ; and, as such, was particularly designed to connect itself with the coming of the Messiah, in whose mission that of John was to terminate. It was to “prepare the way of the Lord” Jesus ; and it did so in a remarkable manner. It is to these points of connection and preparation that I shall briefly direct your attention. Consider,

1. The extraordinary events connected with the birth of the Baptist.

It was not to be expected that the Messiah would be manifested in the flesh without some previous and immediate notices of a supernatural kind, intended to awaken attention. But for a very long period in the Jewish Church, there had been no such visitations from on high. Its ancient glory appeared to have all departed. There was no Urim and Thummim ; no visible glory on the mercy seat ; no prophet had

arisen in Israel ; and no visions of the Holy One had been vouchsafed. Suddenly an angel appeared to a priest in the temple. He comes out dumb, and the people perceive that he had seen a vision. This was the sign of an event as remarkable as the conception of Isaac, and of the same kind ; for the aged Elizabeth, like the aged Sarah, brings forth a son by miracle ; such a miracle as had not taken place from the time of Abraham. On the naming of the child the dumbness of the father was removed ; and having, by writing, in the presence of the people, called his name John, he was filled with the spirit of prophecy, and declared his son to be the precursor of the Messias. "And thou, child," said he, "shalt be called the prophet of the Highest : for thou shalt go before the presence of the Lord to prepare his ways ; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God ; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Now, mark here two circumstances, which eminently tended to "prepare the way of the Lord." These extraordinary events awaken the Jewish Church to expectation. "Fear came on all that dwelt round about them : and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be?" They gave also a strong supernatural character to John's person and ministry ; and tended to give the higher authority to his future testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus.

2. Consider his preaching

The circumstances and habits of his life presented him to the view of the people under most impressive aspects. Born preternaturally ; a subject of ancient prophecies ; spending his youth in deep privacy, in preparation for his work, when "the hand of the Lord was with him ;" clothed in rude attire ; feeding on the simplest food ; shunning the walks of greatness ; he burst forth, to shake with the thunder of his sermons a long-slumbering Church : and he did it in the spirit and power of Elias, his type. Like Elias, he was all ardour, courage, and uncompromising fidelity ; stern in reproof, and piercing in language.

His doctrine was in strict accordance with all this. He exclaimed, "Repent ; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ;" and never before were such effects produced. Multitudes came, confessing their sins. All Jerusalem, all Judea, and the region round about Jordan, were baptized of him.

Mark the preparatory character of his preaching. His doctrine of repentance was not that which terminates in mere emotion, and external humiliation. It was spiritual and humbling, and so was preparatory to the mercy of the Messias. All his preaching went to the heart, and was adapted to the state of the people. The Jews trusted in their relation to Abraham ; and John addressing them said, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father ; for God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." They placed repentance in vain outward humiliations ; and he called upon them to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance,"—charity, justice, and mercy. To the people in general he said, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none ; and he that hath meat, let him do like-

wise." To the publicans he said, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." And addressing the soldiers, he said, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." The Jews thought that there was no punishment for them; and he warns them of "the wrath to come." They hoped for temporal blessings from the Messiah; and he called their attention to things spiritual, connected with the work of Christ: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." They looked that he should judge only the Gentiles; and John tells them that the Lord whom they expected would judge them as his Church: "He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner;" that is, save only solid and righteous persons; and "burn up the chaff," the people that were unholy, "with unquenchable fire."

Thus, by a true repentance, he prepared the way for Christ, by making them know their need of a Saviour.

3. Consider his peculiar office as prophet of the Most High.

Other prophets had to predict; he had the honour to indicate, to point out, the long-anticipated Redeemer. There are two circumstances in his office of forerunner of Christ which are particularly striking. The first is, the manner in which Jesus was pointed out to John, in order that he might first know and then announce him. He doubtless knew the history of Christ's birth; he knew that he was about to be manifest to Israel, and that he himself was about to be the instrument of that manifestation; but Providence so ordered it, that they had no intercourse in their youth. Christ was at Nazareth; and John was in privacy in the wilderness, nearly a hundred miles distant; but at the baptism of Jesus he was made known. "And I knew him not," says the Baptist: "but that he should be made manifest unto Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God," John i, 31-34.

The second peculiar circumstance to which we have just alluded is the manner in which Jesus was pointed out by John to others. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Abraham had desired to see his day; and he saw it afar off. The office of Moses was, to set up types and resemblances of him; and all the other prophets, clearly as they described him, only testified "beforehand." They desired, passionately desired, to see him; but were not able. John, surrounded with his disciples, "seeth him walking." The Word, now incarnate, was shrouded in his glory to others, but visible to him: and he saw the purpose of this humility, this stoop to flesh, this putting on of "the form of a servant." He connects it at once with its grand object,—that of voluntary vicarious suffering. Not to set up a kingdom of earthly grandeur; but to give life to the world, by offering up his own. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The disciples knew not then the full meaning of those mysterious words; but John knew them: and he gazed, doubtless,

with awe and wonder on that meek form walking toward him. He saw what no other prophet ever had seen ; he saw the Lamb for the burnt offering ; the immediate preparation made for the final, the grand, the eternal sacrifice. Thus was this great preacher of repentance as great a preacher of Christ, without whom no man can truly preach repentance. Nor is he to be denominated an evangelical preacher only because of this general declaration of Christ's office and character as an atoning Saviour. What a manifestation of the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ is that which the Evangelist St. John has attributed to him ! "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice : this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all : he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth : he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth ; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God : for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii, 28-36.

4. Consider the success of the ministry of John.

That he, like his Master, was set for the fall as well as rising of men,—a savour of death, as well as a savour of life,—is true ; yet the purpose of God was largely accomplished by his important ministry. He was indeed, like his Master, cut off in the prime of life. He fell a victim to his ministerial fidelity, which knew not how to palliate sin, even in a king, any more than did Elias. He fell a sacrifice to the besotted sensuality of Herod, and the malignant arts of a bad woman ; but he had finished his work. He had alarmed the consciences of multitudes ; and he had given his testimony to Christ. Most of the apostles and first disciples of Jesus were trained up by John's ministry, and then went over to the Lord Jesus. Of the multitudes who believed on Christ, at and after the pentecost, it may be inferred, that the seed he had sown, and which had long been dormant, then sprung up ; and when the apostles went into Asia, and other places, to publish the Gospel, zealous and pious disciples of John had prepared the way in several places and instances ; and in them were laid the foundations of those glorious Churches of Christ, which lifted up the light of truth and salvation in the ancient pagan world, till it prevailed against the darkness, and till Jesus was adored as God and the Saviour throughout the vast extent of the Roman empire.

Thus John accomplished his mission.

From this view we propose,

II. To deduce some points of practical instruction.

1. Perhaps we may venture to place first a rule which we may apply to the general interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures. In considering the prophecies which were fulfilled in John, we perceive that the accomplishment was in a spiritual work, and in spiritual results.

Take, for instance, the prophecy in the fortieth chapter of the book of Isaiah, which we have already quoted. A carnal interpreter would conclude, that the Messiah would be ushered into the world with great pomp ; that his forerunner, his herald, would go before him to arrange the triumphant march. But we see, in fact, that this levelling of hills, and this raising of valleys, of which the prophet speaks, is simply the removal of moral obstructions, both then and now, by the preaching of repentance. Here the Jews stumbled ; for they looked not beyond the mere letter of the prophecy. Yet this is a more glorious accomplishment than that which the Jews anticipated, inasmuch as spiritual and heavenly things are above those which are earthly. So when you, my brethren, meet with Jewish and carnal interpretations of unfulfilled prophecy, relating to the future state of the Church, and the dominion of Christ over all nations, suspect their correctness. The kingdom of Christ is only spiritual to the end of time ; and figures taken from earthly kingdoms are but shadows of the more glorious reality. There is no reign so glorious as that over the hearts of a converted world.

2. Learn, that the only preparation for the reception of Christ is a true repentance ; and learn, also, what true repentance is.

For it is to be remarked, that the doctrine of repentance ended not with John. Jesus and his apostles taught the necessity of this ; for God calls upon all men every where to repent. Repentance, as explained by John's ministry, is a conviction of the fact of sin, but a sharp and painful conviction. A conviction that never produced humility, never sighed, never wept, never "wept apart," and never sought solitude for the purpose of prayer and reflection, is not that which is an element of true repentance. It is a serious and painful apprehension of danger. Hence John asked the Pharisees and Sadducees that came to his baptism, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" His meaning was, You are not warned. You use the forms of repentance, but you repent not. You say, "We have Abraham to our father," and have no sense of danger. My brethren, there is a "wrath to come," which you must dread.

Repentance is an humble confession of sin. The people confessed generally to John ; for it was impossible for him to enter into the particulars of each case ; but to God they confessed their sins in detail.

Repentance is fruitful. Under its influence the churl becomes liberal ; the unjust becomes righteous ; and those who had formerly been careless of their spiritual interests wait upon God in the use of every means of grace.

Repentance is despairing, but hopeful. The people who were awakened under John's ministry felt that in themselves there was no help ; and he taught the whole of them to wait for Christ the Saviour. This leads us to observe,

3. That a state of penitence is but a preparatory state, from which we must pass into a higher.

How many persons mistake here ! Their whole life is only a succession of repentances and lapses into sin. Or, if they are saved from outward sin, they place the perfection of religion in gloom and fear, which they call humility.

What, then, is the Baptist ? Is he the only Saviour ever sent ?

Was he a forerunner, or not? He was; and O rejoice in the Deliverer, the Saviour, who came after him! Hear, O thou sorrowful spirit, even the Baptist says, speaking of Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease;" and, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" for these are his words. And art thou a disciple of his? Hast thou been awakened by his warning voice? Yet hear even him say, as he leads thee forth, "Behold the Lamb of God." Look at Christ in his sacrificial character; trust wholly in the virtue of his death; fly to arms which always bid thee welcome. Believe, and thou shalt be saved from all guilt, all fear, all sin. If the way be prepared, the Lord cometh, having salvation; and his glory shall soon be revealed.

4. The connection between impenitence and the rejection of Christ is strongly marked by the subsequent history.

The truly penitent every where heard Christ gladly. But to the impenitent he was continually a stumbling block and an offence. The worldly people expected temporal blessings, and despised his spiritual ones. The Pharisee, trusting in his own righteousness, and the scribe in his literature, rejected Him who "came to seek and to save that which was lost." The Sadducee trusted in his philosophy and reason, and would not stoop to be instructed and saved by "the Man of sorrows." What a change would true repentance have made in all these characters! And how would it have altered their views and feelings in regard to Christ! See this in Saul of Tarsus. He was all this, except a Sadducee. He was a worldly Pharisee, and proud of literature, and treated Christ with scorn and malice. See him when brought to repentance, humbly inquiring of the doctrine of Jesus; and sitting no longer at the feet of Gamaliel, but of Ananias.

And see we not that Christ is now to men a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, just as they are removed from a penitent and humbled spirit? Look at the infidel, who denies all law and all sin. He mocks and derides the Saviour. Look at the Socinian. He boasts of his natural virtue, and of the perfection of his works. He praises the character of Christ; but denies the doctrine of the cross. Like the Jews mentioned by St. John, he follows Christ with admiration, till he hears him say, "Before Abraham was I am;" and then he "takes up stones to stone him." Look at the legalist. If he even receives Christ in name, and is orthodox in opinion, he rejects the doctrine of faith in the atonement, as the sole instrument of justification before God. If he may not share in the merit by which justification is obtained, he rejects the blessing. Look at the worldly man; who, whatever his creed may be, makes light of Christ, and of his redeeming mercy.

O, would God but work with my word this hour, and give you all repentance, what a change would be wrought in your views and feelings in regard to Christ! Art thou an infidel? Thy guilty tongue, which has so often blasphemed his name, would pray, and pray to him. Art thou a Socinian? Thou wouldest at once see that a creature-saviour is nothing; and say to Christ, "My Lord, and my God!" Art thou a man of the world? Thou wouldest be ready to sell all that thou hast, that thou mightest have treasure in heaven. Art thou in truth a penitent, long seeking, without finding, the pardoning mercy of God? A deeper

pang would quicken thy flight to the refuge; and a deeper sense of thy nothingness lead thee to take Christ for thy all. Art thou a believer? O could I produce repentance in believers, for neglects, and sad deficiencies in the Christian spirit and conduct, then would you receive Christ as you never received him before. You would place a more absolute reliance upon his atoning sacrifice, as the only meritorious ground of your acceptance with God; and you would look to him for richer supplies of quickening and sanctifying grace.

5. It is in this way that hinderances to Christianity are to be removed, and the world is to be brought to the acknowledgment of Christ.

The preaching of the Gospel is always first the preaching of repentance. Men are by the law convinced of sin; they see that there is no other Saviour but Jesus; and they are thus led to receive him as "made of God unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Outward arrangements of Providence will make way for preaching; and preaching is to make way for Christ.—Thus "every mountain and hill will be made low, every valley shall be exalted, the rough places shall be made smooth, and crooked places straight; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—"Heaven and earth shall pass away;" but his truth shall never fail.

SERMON CXIX.—*The Worship of God.*

"God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," John iv, 24.

MOST of you will recollect that the words of the text were spoken by our Lord in conversation with the woman of Samaria; a conversation of the most interesting kind, not only as it discovers the condescension of Jesus Christ, his unwearied activity in the work which was given him to do, and his readiness to embrace every opportunity of doing good; but also because it lays down two most important principles, the establishment of which was, in fact, one object of his coming into the world. In the first place, he here shows that though salvation was of the Jews, it was no longer to be confined to them. He thus preaches his Gospel to this Samaritan woman, and subsequently to the Samaritans themselves; and thus both opened the door of faith to them who were beyond the limits of the Jewish fold, and intimated to his apostles that they, like himself, should have no respect of persons, but consider his religion as the common patrimony of mankind.

The next principle is, that after his own work on earth should be accomplished, and his religion perfected, the worship of God should no longer be confined to places exclusively dedicated to his service, like the temple at Jerusalem. This is established by the words immediately connected with the text. From the condescension of our Lord, the woman was emboldened to put an important question to him; a question greatly agitated between her countrymen and the Jews. "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this

mountain ; and ye say, that at Jerusalem men ought to worship." This was the controversy between the Jews and Samaritans. Our Lord replies to her, "Ye," Samaritans, "worship ye know not what ;" your corrupted, paganized system teaches not the true worship of God, nor affords you the means of salvation ; but "we know what we worship ; for salvation is of the Jews." He at the same time assures her that brighter and better days were dawning both for her country and for the world. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Then we have the text, stating the general doctrine on the subject. It contains three propositions, to which I will call your attention.

I. God is a Spirit.

II. He ought to be worshipped.

III. He can only be worshipped acceptably and profitably by those who worship him in spirit and in truth.

I. God is a Spirit.

And let it be observed that this proposition is laid down, not for the purpose of gratifying curiosity, of admitting us into the philosophy of religion by exciting metaphysical inquiries into the nature of God ; but for the purpose of presenting before us the object of our worship under such characters as should both establish in our minds the propriety of worshipping him, and intimate the way in which this is to be done.

All the substances with which we are acquainted are resolvable into two classes ; those which are material, and those which are spiritual. We know of no other existences in the universe. For what we can tell, there may be others ; we pretend not to make our own knowledge the limit of possibility ; but we know of no others. Between that which is material and that which is spiritual there is this great and essential difference, that, as far as we can obtain any proof, no matter, however refined, can be so organized as to be capable of originating a single thought, or experiencing a single feeling. Where, therefore, there is a judgment ; where there is a will ; where there are affections of various kinds, such as you and all the rest of mankind find in yourselves ; there is the subsistence which we call spirit. Of this kind is the spirit of man ; that power which inhabits the body, and without which we could not see, nor hear, nor feel ; that power which thinks and judges ; which hopes and fears ; which chooses and rejects ; in which reside the various faculties and affections of our intellectual nature. There can be no doubt but that the word is used in the text in this popular sense. God is a Spirit, as man is a spirit. There is no difference, as to what may be termed the popular characters of spirit, between the spirit of man, and God, considered as a Spirit ; for God made man in his own image. But here is one great and radical difference. Human and angelic spirits are finite ; God, whom we worship, is infinite. This, then, is what is comprised in the idea which the text presents : God is a Spirit ; a Being having properties to which the properties of our own spirits are represented as bearing resemblance ; and an infinite Spirit, having all those properties in unbounded perfection. And thus have we such views of him set before us, as are most calculated to direct and encourage us in every act of solemn devotion.

1. Because God is an infinite Spirit, he is present in every place ; and therefore his worshippers may in every place find him.

We are ourselves conscious, limited as we are, of being present in some place. Where we are, there we are present. It is very likely that in the order of spirits there may exist beings who are present to much larger portions of space than we ourselves are. For what we can tell, there may be beings who are present to more parts of the world at once, in the same manner as we are present in the place where we worship, or the house where we dwell. But when we conceive of God, we conceive of his presence being unlimited as the other perfections of his nature. And this is the character which he assumes in Scripture, and which his pious servants ascribe to him.—“Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?” “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.” This is encouraging. We no longer ask whether God is to be worshipped at Jerusalem, or in the Samaritan mount ; whether we shall find him here or there, in the desert, or in the crowded city. God is a Spirit ; and wherever there is a heart with moral dispositions suited to his own nature, there he is, and there he may be worshipped.

2. From this property of his nature, as being an infinite and eternal Spirit, arises the perfection of his knowledge, his omniscience.

However matter may be extended, it would possess no consciousness of any object with which it might come in contact. But when we conceive of spiritual presence, we conceive of consciousness and knowledge too. Wherever we are present we know. Persons perceive the objects to which they are present. Apply this to God. When his presence is demonstrated, so is his knowledge ; for where he is present, there he is in all the perfections of his nature. In heaven his presence is more brightly manifested than elsewhere ; but that presence, as the presence of the Lord God of knowledge and boundless perfection, is wherever his creatures can be. They, therefore, are present to him, and most perfectly known by him. “There is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.” He is present to mark the risings of desire ; the very commencement of principles and feelings. “He understandeth our thought afar off.” Let this admonish the sinner. Not even his thoughts can he conceal from God, who shall bring him into judgment. But it is, at the same time, most encouraging to the real worshipper, who is conscious of his own sincerity, and desires to have the thoughts of his heart cleansed within him, to know that God searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins. Where there are true desires and aspirations after him, they are not hidden from his sight, nor disregarded by him.

3. God is a Spirit : hence arises the consideration of his ceaseless activity.

We feel conscious of something of this in ourselves : we find no weariness in the operations even of a finite spirit ; much study may be a weariness to the flesh, but not to the soul ; we experience no other weariness in the most intense application to abstruse subjects than that which arises from the imperfection of the material fabric which the soul inhabits ; in this sense “the spirit is willing, but the

flesh is weak." This is a high perfection of our nature ; the power of the soul is now far too mighty for the feebleness of the body ; but it shall not always be so : when the Saviour shall have changed the vile bodies of his saints, and this mortal have put on immortality, then shall even the body be a fit organ for the ceaseless activity of an ever-thinking, untired spirit. But apply these thoughts to the spirituality of God : "My Father worketh hitherto," said Christ, "and I work." There is an infinite activity in the nature of God ; his beatitude implies nothing of that indolent repose which was ascribed to him by the Epicureans. Every faithful worshipper is absolutely sure, not only of the notice of his eye, but of the unwearied operation of his hand. Omnipotence is power in its simplicity and perfection ; and this is the power of God ; "he worketh hitherto ;" let him speak, and it is done ; let him command, and it standeth fast. O how delightful to the sincere worshippers ! He whom they worship is never wearied in blessing them ; never is the arm of the Lord shortened that it cannot save ; never is his ear heavy that it cannot hear.

4. God is a Spirit ; and we thence infer the unchangeableness of his nature.

An infinite Spirit must, of necessity, be immutable ; and this lays a firm foundation for the trust we are commanded to repose in him. Even we, imperfect and changeable as we are, yet, in some degree, partake of this property of spirit : a human spirit is, in many respects, unchangeable ; there are moral relations and principles in which this is the case ; and, physically, it is obviously the case. The body grows and increases in strength, and then it weakens and decays : not so the spirit : that remains essentially the same. Not composed of matter of parts which, being united, may be separated ; so long as God wills it to continue in existence, so long must it remain, and still be what it was in the beginning. Apply this, too, to God : in a sense in which the term is inapplicable even to the most exalted spiritual natures, he is the Lord, and he changeth not ; "he has laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands ; they shall perish, but he remaineth" eternally the same. There are two kinds of change of which created spirits are capable, and which strongly mark their natural imperfection : they may change from good to bad ; they may give their faculties a wrong direction, lose their holiness and felicity, and fall into misery and moral corruption. And they may change from good to better. The purest and highest spirits may thus experience a continual improvement in their condition ; but all this argues finiteness and imperfection. But God is infinite ; what he is, he is without limitation of degree. He fills the whole orb of perfection at once, nor can he ever suffer diminution and loss ; and therefore all the testimonies which his people have given of his goodness and mercy, his wisdom, and power, and truth, remain to the present moment as applicable as ever. We may say who worship him now, "Our fathers trusted in thee, and they were helped ; and thy truth endureth from generation to generation." What even our friends were yesterday, they may not be to-day or to-morrow ; but he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

God is a Spirit ; and with the views which this declaration suggests we should make our minds familiar, because they furnish the reason of all that is implied in worshipping him.

II. I come, then, to my second proposition, that God ought to be worshipped.

1. He ought to be worshipped, because he ought to be acknowledged; and publicly worshipped, because publicly acknowledged.

Worship is, in fact, a direct acknowledgment of God, an acknowledgment of his adorable perfections, of our own dependence upon him, and of the blessings we have received from him; it is an act of homage, trust, and gratitude, and therefore worship ought to be public. We may serve him in private, but we do not in this honour him before men; we acknowledge what he is to ourselves, but we acknowledge not his universal dominion and bounty; we seek mercy for ourselves, but we acknowledge not the character of the common salvation. In the institution of worship God regards society as well as individuals. It is of importance to society that he should be known and glorified as God, and that his creatures should feel and express their dependence upon him. The being and perfections of God, his universal dominion and bounty, are truths which it behoves society to receive; without them all society would be dark and vicious. Whoever, therefore, neglects the worship of God, virtually denies God, and does what he can to darken, and corrupt, and injure society: remember this when a variety of little concerns may tempt you to absent yourself from the house of God. Every act of worship acknowledges God; and were your absence to become habitual,—and it is by the repetition often of acts seemingly trivial that habits are formed,—you would publicly live without God in the world, sinning against him yourself and dishonouring him before men.

2. God ought to be worshipped, because it is in acts of religious worship that we acquire just views of ourselves.

No man is ever found to have correct views of himself who is not in the habit of worshipping God. If we do not regularly draw nigh to God, there will spring up within us a principle fatal to our peace, and destructive to our salvation: pride will spring up. How is it that this terrible evil is nourished in the heart? We judge of every thing by comparison; it is therefore of the last importance to us to be careful what standards we judge by, and what kinds of comparison we make. He who is in the habit of comparing himself, for instance, with his fellow creatures who are below him in life, becomes proud and supercilious; he who places before him his superiors in rank or mental attainment, will acquire some degree of modesty; but he who brings himself constantly into comparison and contrast with God, he alone feels his own insignificance, and sinks as into nothing before the greatness which he contemplates,—he feels himself but as the dust of the balance, the drop of the bucket, and lighter than vanity. Humble penitence is the result of the same process, and must be nourished by its continuance. Read the account of the Pharisee and the publican who went up to the temple to worship; the Pharisee said, “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, nor even as this publican.” You see exactly the process I have mentioned producing spiritual pride, and hardening the heart against repentance; he was in the habit of comparing himself only with those whose standard of morals was lower than his own. The publican, on the contrary, felt himself in the presence of God, with whom he brought himself into compari-

son ; he felt the contrast, and the sight produced the broken heart and the contrite spirit ; he stood, therefore, afar off, smiting his breast, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Thus will the acts of solemn and religious worship always prevent our thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think ; for they bring us into the presence of the Great, the Holy, and the High, and we there feel that we are but dust and ashes. You will see that I have not laid too great stress on this, when you recollect the importance attached in Scripture to humility itself : "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Only to that man will he look who is of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at his word.

3. God himself has rendered it so obligatory upon us, that we have no reason to expect the slightest blessing except through the medium of his worship.

This is his own appointment, and it ought to satisfy us. The full reason of his appointments may never be discovered to us in our present state : we may not be able to say why prayer is made necessary to blessing ; but so it is. God will be inquired of by us even for those things that he has promised, that he may do them for us : this is one great reason of the appointment of the Mediator. When man became a sinner, he could no longer approach God with acceptable worship ; the throne of the Divine goodness had become a throne of justice ; and man, shut out from prayer, was shut out from every blessing. Jesus Christ was appointed to open to us the door of the house of God ; by him we have access to the holiest of all, and may thus rejoice in hope of blessings forfeited by sin, and restored and offered in Christ ; a new and a living way is opened ; guilty man has liberty to approach to God for mercy ; God has given us, in his Son, a pledge that he will hear our prayer, and bestow every blessing upon us suited to our condition in time and eternity. All this proves to us that God will bestow no blessing on us, except through the exercise of religious worship.

4. If we consider the exalted pleasure which the soul receives from religious worship, we shall see a farther reason why God ought to be worshipped.

I know of no pleasure so rich, none so pure, none so hallowing in their influences, and constant in their supply, as those which result from the true and spiritual worship of God. I know, indeed, that with respect to all formal worship, it may be said, "Behold, what a weariness is it ;" but the testimony of the saints in all ages proves that the true worship of God produces sensations of pleasure in the mind so new and so attractive, that no day is so pleasant to them as that which they are permitted to devote to this delightful employment. We may judge of the state of the spiritual life in our hearts by attending to this circumstance. When the mind becomes cold and worldly, and the spiritual life weak, then do we delight less in the power and glory of God as seen in the sanctuary ; the closet loses its attractions : but when we are completely under the influence of the living Spirit, our heart will ardently desire to approach to God, and will always say, "It is good for me to draw near to him." We shall be drawn to his presence again and again with unutterable delight ; we shall have an intense and sacred thirst for the house and ordinances of God. "How

amiable are thy tabernacles," we shall say, "O Lord of hosts!" "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Pleasant as the cool water brooks are to the thirsty hart, so pleasant will it be to us to approach unto the living God; and we shall join with the psalmist in saying, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

5. The last reason I shall assign is, that the true worship of God is, in fact, one direct means of preparing us for heaven.

If we would gain the heavenly state, we must obtain and cultivate those dispositions which qualify us for the enjoyment of it; and this is chiefly done in worship. A great part of the happiness of heaven will consist in worship; we shall "see his face." We know, by other passages of Scripture, what that meaneth: we shall behold the fully manifested glory of God, and that will perpetually excite sentiments of adoring love; impressed by the glories of his infinite majesty, we shall fall before his footstool, lost in wonder, love, and praise. It is impossible thoroughly to believe in the heaven of the Bible without being convinced that the best means of preparation for it consists in the constant worship of almighty God; living in the spirit of adoration, and praise, and prayer; and, under the influence of that spirit, cultivating more and more that heavenly disposition which delights in the service and ordinances of God.

III. Not only is God a Spirit, who ought to be worshipped by us, but, if we would worship him acceptably, we must worship him in spirit and in truth.

We ought always to be aware, that not every thing that professes to be the worship of God is so in reality. We cannot expect that all these great and glorious effects will result from insincere and formal worship. God has always declared his peculiar indignation against all those persons who have drawn near to him with their lips, and honoured him with their mouth, while their heart has been far from him.

1. We are to worship God "in truth."

And this may be taken two ways.

(1.) Truth is sometimes placed, in the New Testament, in opposition to the shadowy dispensation of the law. "The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." What the ceremonial law was in shadowy representation, the Christian dispensation is in truth and substance. This indicates to us, that, under the Gospel dispensation, God will be no longer worshipped by sacrificial ceremonies. Though this may not seem so interesting a doctrine to us now, it was one which required to be stated and insisted on at the time in which the whole manner of worship was about to be changed, and approach to God without blood established. Since the death of Christ, and the establishment of his intercession, there can be no sacrificial worship. The blood of bulls and of goats never possessed any substantial virtue; and they can no longer be types now that He is come whom they were appointed to prefigure.

(2.) To worship God in truth chiefly signifies, to worship God in a true manner; that is, in the way which he has himself appointed. For this reason, the worship of God by types was, before the coming

of Christ, the true worship of God. This was his own appointment. What, then, is the true manner of worshipping God under the Christian dispensation? I refer not now to that which is subordinate, but to that which is characteristic and essential. I answer, It is to worship him through the mediation of Christ. To worship him under that character in which the doctrine of the atonement places him before us, and with those dispositions which it requires. I am bold to say, whatever demands may be made on our liberality and candour, that the declarations of God's book require us to declare that when he is not worshipped through the mediation of Christ, he is not truly worshipped at all. Such worship is, in reality, false worship. A man may think highly of some of the perfections of God, and fancy that he can worship him acceptably on other grounds than those laid down in this book, that is, through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. The true question is, Is this God's method of worship, as declared by himself? Are we not told, that there "is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved?" If we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, is it not by the blood of Jesus Christ? No man cometh to the Father but by the Son; nor can our sacrifices be acceptable to God, if they are not presented by Him who is our great High Priest, our Advocate and Mediator.

2. But we are likewise to worship God "in spirit."

It is possible to worship him in truth, and not in spirit. A man may refer his acts of formal worship to the sacrifice of Christ, and yet there may be no real, saving dependence upon it. Orthodoxy does not necessarily produce piety. Even where the opinions are correct, it does not necessarily follow that those dispositions exist which are essential to the true worship of God. What, then, is implied in worshipping God in spirit?

(1.) It is to worship him as a known, and not as an unknown, God. The understanding is thus called in. I do not know how any man can be said to worship God who is not a contemplative man; who does not study the Divine character; who does not endeavour to see God in his providences, and works, and word. I cannot think much of that worship which merely results from the general prejudices of education. Are we anxious to know what is the good, the acceptable, and the perfect will of God? Then do we pray and sing with the spirit and with the understanding. God gives many blessings through the medium of the understanding; and unless we are brought to such inquiries into the character and will of God as shall issue in an enlarged acquaintance with them, we shall be the sport of every transient impression, and our worship will be the mere ebullition of feeling, instead of the service of the entire man.

(2.) To worship God in spirit is to worship him with a submissive will. The will is another faculty of our spirit, and must be engaged in every act of religion. Where the will is in rebellion, God cannot be worshipped by us. Our prayers may be very eloquent; but if we regard iniquity in our heart, God will not hear them. He who worships God in spirit binds his whole nature, and lays it on the altar of God. He feels that he is not his own, and especially so, because he is bought with a price. He confesses from his heart, that he is placed under infinite obligation to glorify God; and to God, therefore, he

yields himself. Remember never to appear before the throne of mercy to seek its blessings without this submissive will.

(3.) Worshipping God in spirit includes, not only the understanding and will, but also the affections. I will particularly mention three.

(i.) Desire. What is prayer, brethren, but desire in the heart? It is possible for us to pray without words, because the very essence of prayer consists in the desire of the heart; but without desire there can be no prayer. Our desires must principally and eminently regard all spiritual blessings,—the favour of God, union and fellowship with him, and all the light and life he has promised to communicate. And these we ought to desire above all things. The language of our inmost soul should be, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” If, therefore, our desires be cold and languid; if we prefer any thing to the favour of God, and the light of his countenance; we do not worship God in spirit. Desire is wanting. The incense may be there, but no fire.

(ii.) Faith, or trust. The humble recumbency of my spirit upon the Divine favour. Seeing that my breath is in my nostrils; that all creatures are frail and fleeting; and viewing the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in his Son; I must trust in his faithfulness. And not only must we, generally, thus cast all our care upon God, but especially rely on the sacrifice and intercession of Christ for present and eternal salvation.

(iii.) Gratitude. When to the affections I have already mentioned this one is added, then may we be truly said to worship God in spirit. We then present to God a heart deeply sensible of his goodness; sensible that he has placed us under infinite obligations. Such a heart will seek every possible and proper mode of expressing what it feels. O for more of that sacred feeling, ever acknowledging our obligations, and delighting to acknowledge them, and confessing, at the same time, that they can never be discharged! Then do we indeed worship God, when we feel as though lost in these depths and heights; when the mercy of God overwhelms us; when we feel with David, when he cried, “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.” “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”

What remains now, but to conclude with this observation,—that one of the greatest and most important of the privileges confided to us by the Redeemer, is the privilege to which he calls us, of having fellowship and intercourse with God. But recollect that this is your duty; the great duty of your rational nature and dependent situation. If you desire to escape the fearful sentence of the wicked, and to be admitted into the heavenly temple, to serve God there day and night, then must you worship God while here on earth; and that not in carelessness, and formality, and sin, but in spirit and in truth.

Brethren, many of you are conscious of the want of that intensity and ardour of feeling in your devotional exercises which you know to be your privilege, which you acknowledge to be your duty. Perhaps the great reason of this lukewarmness and wandering is this,—you do not sufficiently guard and watch over your hearts. He that would carry renewed life into his private devotions, must be regular in the

public ordinances of God; and he who would bring life into public devotion must take care to be habitual in the duties of his closet. But you must do more. While in the world you must watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation and a snare. We must give up ourselves to the guidance of the Divine Spirit; and then shall we be led as fully into the presence of God as it may be manifested on earth. And this his presence shall go with us in our journeyings, and so will he give us rest. We shall then ever feel that we have access to God; that we are permitted to come before him, and make known to him all our requests. Thus worshipping God, we shall derive so many blessings from his love, that our joyous song shall be, "Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." On them that thus worship him in spirit and in truth, he will pour down his blessings abundantly; and, in a future state, their place shall be before his throne, to worship him for ever.

SERMON CXX.—*The Way to Happiness.*

"If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear," Job xi, 13-15.

MEN in general ask, "Who will show us any good?" Their pursuit is enjoyment; and their complaint, that it is not attained or attainable. Brethren, the failure lies not in the barrenness of the soul, but in the want of culture; not in the absence of refreshing streams, but in our resorting to dry channels. In a word, the fault lies, not in the appointments of God, but in the folly of man.

I purpose at present to show you that happiness is within your reach; and to point out the means by which it may be infallibly attained. In order to this, I avail myself of the words of Zophar addressed to Job.

Job was now afflicted and miserable; and though the words as addressed to him had a mistaken application, yet he did not disregard them. In full accordance with the admonition given him, he prepared his heart, he stretched out his hands toward God; and at length he lifted up his face without spot; he was steadfast, and did not fear.

I. Brethren, the first direction is, to prepare our hearts; or, rightly to dispose and order our hearts, especially with reference to subsequent acts and exercises.

If we would be truly happy, we must seek happiness within. There the fountain of enjoyment must be opened.

A prepared heart is thoughtful and considerate.

For is this a world to live in without serious consideration? Are we appointed here by infinite wisdom and goodness for some important end? Are we always under the notice of almighty God? Can nothing be good or evil to us, but as he appoints? Are we sinners, and need pardon? polluted, and need restoration? Must we be judged,

and sentenced? Is our life a vapour, so that a breath of wind may dissipate it, and leave before us nothing but what is eternal? And are we not called by every precept of wisdom, and duty, and interest, and hope, to become so considerate and thoughtful, as to keep the full view of our case before us, and to determine accordingly?

This is the first step to solid peace of mind. The careless and trifling shall never attain it. A prepared heart is a penitent and humble heart. Sin is the great hinderance to human happiness; and the removal of it is therefore absolutely necessary. But the conscience will never be purged from dead works, nor will the nature of any man be sanctified, unless he first be convinced of his guilt and corruption, and his spirit become contrite and submissive. Such is the order of God, as every where laid down in the Scriptures of truth.

A prepared mind is a decided mind.

The mind thinks with reference to decision; otherwise thinking is a vain employ, a mere mocking of intelligence. And if the mind decides under that preparedness which serious thoughtfulness, prayer, and the aid of God, which he never refused, all concur to supply, it will determine to make the cultivation and salvation of the soul the great end of life. It will embrace, with an entire trust, the atonement and mediation of Christ, as the appointed means of life, health, and safety. It will determine to refer the whole course of private and public conduct to the will of God.

This, and this alone, is that true preparedness of heart which is the great basis of human happiness; and which prepares for the subsequent directions and promises contained in the text.

II. The second direction here given is the stretching out of the hand toward God.

This figurative expression denotes the act and the habit of prayer; which is another source of relief and peace put within the reach of men; and the most copious source of true happiness, though so strangely and so criminally neglected.

It is this which, when offered in the exercise of faith in Christ, obtains remission of sin, and brings into the soul the sweet and peaceful sense of reconciliation. It is this that supplies the life and vigour of the Spirit; for he is given, in all the plenitude of his power and love, in answer to prayer. It is this that repairs the wastes of love and fervour which are expended in the world. It is this that, bringing us into the presence of God, collects all our thoughts relating to the things which most concern us. It is this that engages the daily providence of God in our behalf; and derives from him blessing, guidance, and support. He who has the heart to pray can never want; and he can never be long cast down.

The expression of "stretching forth the hand" is strikingly descriptive of true and prevalent prayer. It was an action over a sacrifice, as we learn from many passages of Scripture; and it marked man's submission to the rites which God had appointed, his trust in them, and his appeal to God upon their presentation.

It was an action which acknowledged God as the source of supply and help.

It was the action of desire. The man met God in his own appointed ways, and directed his most earnest thoughts and desires to heaven.

It was an action of waiting upon God, until he should return, and have mercy upon the humble suppliant.

Such are the characters of true prayer. Christ is the appointed sacrifice; the Lamb of God's own providing. Sinful men are to stretch out the hand of faith over that sacrifice; to submit to be justified and saved through his death; to wait upon God with strong desire, till he manifest his love, and communicate the promised grace. When Joshua led the armies of Israel to battle, Moses ascended an adjoining mountain for the purpose of prayer: "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. And Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek by the edge of the sword." A striking illustration of the nature, and of the power and prevalence, of fervent and believing prayer; the prayer which brings comfort and deliverance.

III. The third direction is, personal reformation: "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away."

Those who sin are not generally the men who pray; but some do. They pray both in public and in secret, and yet do not renounce all evil.

My brethren, the most perverse, and the most absurd attempt that men have ever made, is to reconcile religion with the practice of sin; and this will appear to you, if you will consider the only principles upon which such an attempt can be made.

It may suppose that God loves religious services for their own sake. Hear, then, how this case is met: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them."

Or the attempt may suppose that God can be deceived by a show of outward piety, if outward morality be superadded. Hear, then, how this is met: "The Lord seeth not as man seeth." Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart. Hence his command by the prophet: "Rend your hearts, and not your garments." "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Or the attempt to reconcile religion with the practice of sin supposes that men may sin because grace abounds. Hear, then, how the apostle refutes this principle; "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin then reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Equally strong and decisive on this subject is the language of St. John: "Let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil."

Or the attempt in question supposes that the end of religion is to save men from punishment: whereas to save them from sin is the direct and immediate design of Christianity. "Thou shalt call his name

Jesus," said the angel to Joseph; "for he shall save his people from their sins." "Unto you first," exclaims the Apostle Peter, "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning you away every one of you from his iniquities."

All personal sin, therefore, must be a source of misery; because it cannot be connected with a sense of God's favour, or with safety. Pardoning mercy will never be extended to a man who lives in the love and practice of sin; and every such person is liable continually to the wrath of God, and to the punishment due to his offences.

"If," then, "there is iniquity in thine hand, put it far away." If you have hitherto practised it, renounce it entirely, and renounce it for ever.

"If iniquity" be shut up secretly "in thine hand," let it not remain there any longer. It is known to God, and excites his indignation as much as if it were committed in the most open manner. Conscience is also privy to it, and will smite you for it in your seasons of calm reflection.

If the price of iniquity is in thine hand, property unlawfully obtained, property obtained by deceit or oppression, divest yourself of the evil thing. Make restitution to the men you have injured. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright." But "the unrighteous," the unjust, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

When iniquity is put away, then comes true peace. The blessing of God is given; and conscience approves of the act. The consciousness of integrity and uprightness is a source of the purest enjoyment. "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world."

IV. The fourth direction relates to a godly family discipline.

In ancient times the heads of families were their priests. Of Abraham the Almighty said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Nor did parents cease, in a very important sense, to be the priests in their families, after the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. "David returned" religiously "to bless his household." In this respect no change has taken place under the Christian dispensation. In the Christian Church, as well as among the Jews, there is the public ministry; but the head of every family is still its prophet and its priest: its prophet, to teach the lessons of true religion; and its priest daily to offer spiritual sacrifices. And from this we come to a conclusion which too many forget, but which every wise and pious person will carefully remember, that, if he is at the head of a family, he is, in fact, a sacred person, and has a sacred office. His office is to instruct his household in the truths of God's law and Gospel. "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children," is the express command of God. The Jewish master offered the paschal lamb, to show us that heads of families are to endeavour to promote, in those who are dependent upon them, an interest in "Christ our Passover," who is "sacrificed for us." You care for the education and maintenance of your children, and for their future suc-

cess in life ; but, above all, you are bound to care for their spiritual interests, and to labour to promote the salvation of their souls.

Our ancestors understood this duty. Children sought the blessing of their fathers ; who invoked upon their offspring, kneeling before them, the mercy of their Father in heaven. It is a subject of regret, that this interesting and impressive form is lost among us ; but the substance of it we may and ought to retain. The sons of Job “ went and feasted in their houses, every one his day ; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all : for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”

And then, in accordance with all this religious concern, there is to be the actual putting away of evil from your families. So Jacob, leading his family from a people that were beginning to be infected with idolatry, said to them, “ Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments : and let us arise, and go up to Bethel ; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.” And you, heads of families, are chargeable with all the evil that you allow under your respective roofs. Your example ought to be against evil, in every form. Your counsel ought to be against evil. Your authority ought to be against evil. Remember the case of unfaithful Eli, whose “ sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” Upon him and his children great and terrible judgments were inflicted. In all cases of sin, that may occur in your own families, content not yourselves by saying, with him, “ Nay, my sons, this is no good report that I hear of you ;” but, as far as authority can, remedy the evil ; so that, for any thing you know to the contrary, your house may be sanctified to God.

From such a course of family discipline and order God’s blessing will not be withheld. Peaceful and happy families, we acknowledge, do not always appear where these means are used ; but they are generally found where such a course is adopted ; and hence the result of the whole is expressed in the text in language at once beautiful and striking : “ for then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot ; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear.”

“ Thy face” shall be “ without spot.” As a consequence of the entire renunciation of sin, and of the surrender of the heart to God, the face shall not be darkened by the pressure of inward sorrow, which throws its cloud upon the countenance. The face shall be “ lifted up” in holy confidence toward God ; and it shall be undefiled by a spot of guilty shame toward men.

It is farther promised, “ Thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear.” The heart of a person thus converted to God, and devoted to his will, shall not be a slave to the fear of future evil. Death has lost its terror ; and even the day of the general judgment is regarded as the day of consummate bliss. Every future scene and object is gilded with hope.

We may see in this a representation of the happy effect of habitual and confirmed piety upon the outward condition of men ; that is, in its

lowest sense. This is not so uniformly the case under the Christian as under former dispensations ; yet, in the ordinary course of things, and where special reasons do not interfere, even now the doctrine of the text receives an affecting illustration. What is it that gives the cheerfulness of content to the countenance, but that which most effectually gives it to the heart ?—a recognition of God's order, and entire acquiescence in it. What is it that clears the countenance from the spots of care and dissatisfaction so effectually, as a mind grateful to God for all his benefits, because it feels that it is undeserving of them ; and grateful that his sufferings are not heavier, because it is felt that in rigorous justice they might be made so ? What is it that gives a modest, but firm confidence to man before his fellow men, so that he can meet his enemies in the gate, but that he can lift up his face without spot, and challenge the world as to his integrity ? What is it, too, that saves men so effectually from that which so often destroys all present peace,—a fearful foreboding as to the future,—as that strong faith in God's providence, which makes the heart steadfast, so that we fear not ?

And then, may I not also add, that, though poverty and affliction fall to the lot of God's children, much poorer, and more afflicted in various ways, would most of them have been, but for their interest in him.—At the same time, many, very many, have been, by his blessing, conducted from inferior to higher stations ; and have character, influence, consideration, honour, and wealth, in different degrees, altogether to be traced to the influence of religious habits, and as the result of acknowledging God in all their ways.

These are things that are not to be disregarded ; but there are still higher objects within the reach of all. For “if thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him ; if iniquity be in thine hand,” and “thou put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle ;” thy life shall be a happy life, in whatever outward path thou mayest take thy journey to the skies. Thou shalt have confidence toward God. The burden of an inward sense of guilt shall be removed ; thou shalt walk with thy Maker and God ; and the peace which the world cannot give shall be thine. A stronger faith and livelier joys shall be thy portion on earth ; and, standing on the falling ruins of thy own nature, “thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear.” Thy heart and thy flesh shall fail ; but God will be the strength of thy heart, and thy portion for ever.

Go, then, careless man ; neglect this preparation ; live as thoughtlessly as if there was no watching eye in heaven ; no patient, long-suffering Redeemer ; no future account to be rendered to the Judge of quick and dead ; no heaven of endless bliss, and no hell of interminable wo and pain. Never “stretch out thy hand to God,” except in the mockery of worship, or as the dry and withered hand of a mere form. Let thy “hand” still practise thy secret or open iniquities ; and let the disorder and ungodliness of “thy tabernacles” reprove thee ; and be the moral destroyer, instead of the priest of thy household ; but know that thou wilt not “lift up” a spotless countenance before thy God at last. Then thy personal sins, and the sins of thy family, at which thou hast connived, shall be exhibited against thee ; and the fears thou hast so often with difficulty suppressed shall all

break forth, and bend thee down as a trembling criminal before the bar of judgment. Begin now, then, to prepare thine heart. Hast thou the reason of a man? Use it. Think of these things; and the Lord give thee understanding.

Let those who are of a better mind be confirmed by these views. Connect every thing with heaven. Walk with God. Never let your prayer be restrained. Fix yourselves more firmly upon the rock of truth, faith, and hope; and to a happy life will be added a peaceful death, and a blessed immortality.

SERMON CXXI.—*The Influence of Revealed Truth upon a Nation.*

Preached in behalf of a Sunday School.

“Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely, this great nation is a wise and understanding people,” Deut. iv, 5, 6.

For many generations, doubtless, that most singular period when Israel was called to the mountain of God to receive the law from his mouth would be impressed on the recollections of the people. At no previous time had God ever revealed himself in so much majesty and grandeur; we cannot, therefore, be surprised either that this solemn event was deeply engraven on the memory of those who witnessed it, or that it should be recorded in the inspired volume for the instruction of the Church and the world in all generations. The glory of the dispensation thus marked by the giving of the law, has not disappeared, even at the present day. The apostle tells us that the law was glorious; and its glories have been taken up into the splendours of the Christian Church, and even yet shine in those imperishable truths, and those unchangeable rules, which are received and enforced by all who can claim to be called a wise and understanding people. I know, indeed, that much of the law has passed away; its impressive ceremonial is no more; but this very circumstance—that the law was in part typical, that it was designed, in many of its provisions, to answer a temporary purpose, and that, in the fulness of time, Moses was to give way to Christ—may have been, in many cases, pushed to an extreme, and have prevented us from reading this portion of Scripture with those feelings of reverence and submission which it still demands. Though much has passed away, much has remained. Some important significance must be attached to the words of Christ himself:—“Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” The fact is, that nothing has passed away from the law of Moses but that which was circumstantial; its great principles remain ever the same; there is not a principle embodied in that law which has not, even at the present day, an important application, both to individuals and to society. The great principles of moral obligation are eternal; morality itself is unchangeable. “Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments,” said our

Lord, “and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” And not only is the great principle of moral obligation, contained in the law of Moses, taken up into the Christian dispensation; but, in the Mosaic institute itself, there are principles which are designed to serve as invaluable guides in civil and social life, and which have been set up by God himself, to attract the notice of governments and magistrates, politicians and philanthropists, in all ages; and we may affirm, without scruple, that wherever these principles are introduced, their direct tendency is to bring that nation into a condition as stable and illustrious as that of the Jews while they were an obedient people. I have, therefore, selected the words of the text, not by way of accommodation, but of authority and direction; for in the principles which they contain, kingdoms and families, and individuals are deeply interested.

I direct your attention to two general remarks.

I. That the possession of the revealed truth of God is the most distinguished privilege of a nation.

II. That from the general diffusion of this truth those practical results can alone be expected which shall make these solemn words applicable:—“Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.”

I. I shall not stay to prove the principle included in my first remark,—that the possession of the revealed truth of God is the most distinguished privilege of a people,—inasmuch as I may now suppose that it is acknowledged by all whom I am addressing.

In this respect our case is assimilated to that of the Jews. Statutes and judgments, such as the Lord has commanded, have been taught to us as well as to them, and we ought to make our pious acknowledgments to God, the author of our mercies, for the great things which he has done for us. The moral of this important fact is, that God will deny this same blessing to every nation that refuses his laws. I wish principally to direct you to consider the means by which God puts a nation fully and universally in possession of this great privilege; and this inquiry will bring before us the character and operations of that institution in behalf of which I am now called to address you.

All communications of Divine truth are originally from God himself, by direct revelation, given under such circumstances as shall fully accredit it. In this manner were the statutes and judgments of God communicated to the Israelites, and accredited by signs, and wonders, and mighty acts. A Divine revelation could not be more solemnly confirmed than was the Mosaic institution. The plagues of Egypt, the division of the Red Sea, the clouds and darkness, and thunderings of Mount Sinai, all the providences, whether of judgment or mercy, which followed the observance or disregard of his laws, were proofs that they had received statutes and judgments from God. Is it necessary for me to say that we ourselves not only possess the revelation so accredited, but that we have still brighter manifestations of Divine truth, which have been given us by Christ and his apostles. He who spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son; and this Gospel of the great salvation, which first began to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness with signs, and won-

ders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Nor are we, at the present day, without standing proofs of the divinity and authority of this our book of the law; we have them in the peace and sanctity which flow from the cordial reception of evangelical truth; we have them also both in the miseries of conscience, and in the fearful apprehensions of the future, which follow the disregard and contempt of it. To the present moment is the truth of this blessed book commended to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

But as the truth thus revealed was not intended to be confined in its benefits, but was designed and adapted for a universal blessing, so the original revelation was first deposited for the purpose of being extended and transmitted. Thus unto the Jews were committed the oracles of God, both that they might transmit them to their descendants, and extend them to the world. To Christians are the same injunctions made: the oracles of God are committed to us both for our personal benefit, and for their extension and transmission.

1. It is the duty of every man thus possessing the revelation which God has given, to acquaint himself with it.

God speaks to us, and we are required to hear. Dependent upon him as we are, it is our first duty to mark, and learn, and inwardly to digest that truth which acquaints us with his will. The ignorance which results from our own inattention, from our refusal to instruct ourselves in the things which make for our peace, shall not be admitted, at the bar of God, in excuse for our sin. And this is one way which God has appointed for putting any people in possession of his statutes and judgments: he has made it our duty personally to receive them, and to make ourselves acquainted with them.

2. As God has thus made it the duty of every individual to inquire and to learn, so has he secured to them the means of instruction, by raising up an order of men whose business it is to teach; to make known the statutes and judgments which he has given.

Copies of the law were doubtless written and widely circulated among the ancients; but it was the business of the priest to explain it: "The priest's lips," said Malachi, "should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." They did not give authority to the law,—that was not their province; their duty was not to make the law, but to read and explain it; and from this practice originated preaching. We have a striking illustration of this after the captivity: Ezra found the people greatly ignorant of the truth of God; he determined to remedy this, and therefore made copies of the law, called the people together at Jerusalem, read it in their hearing, and interpreted it in the Chaldee language, which they had acquired during their exile in Babylon. That venerable man had left Babylon full of this design: "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." And so we find him gathering the people together, and after they had worshipped God, he, and others whom he had appointed, "read in the book of the law distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." He did more than this; he caused certain Levites to go into all the cities and do the same; and from his time the institution of synagogues may be dated. We may thus judge of the anxiety of this excellent man to put

all the people, after their return from captivity, in possession of all the revealed will of God. It became the law, that if there were in any place more than two persons who could attend a synagogue, there a synagogue was to be established, and the law read and explained. And we find the same means adopted under the Christian dispensation: Christ has set apart an order of men charged with certain and particular duties. When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men; pastors and teachers, as well as apostles and evangelists, were given; and as they are God's gift, so they must be God's choice. They must be called of God; and no man has a right to minister in the Church but he who, by special call and appointment, is set apart to the work by God himself. The wisdom of the institution is seen in this, that it is made the special and imperative duty of certain men to study the statutes and judgments of the word of God, and to explain them faithfully to the people. And thus, too, does God put a people in possession of revealed truth: first, they are to read and examine the word of God for themselves; and then they are to listen to the teachers whom God sends to explain and apply it.

3. We see this, likewise, in the solemn duty, binding on every parent, to teach these statutes and judgments to his children.

Parents are thus supposed to be acquainted with the word of God themselves; and that which they thus know they are to communicate to their children; these are to be the first principles instilled into their minds; they are, from their very infancy, to be fed with "the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby" in the knowledge and love of the will of God. Never were these parental duties more solemnly urged than in the chapter which lies open before me. Hear a passage from it: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, where the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children." One great reason of the awful solemnities of Mount Sinai itself was to impress upon Jewish parents that it was God's specially declared will that they should teach all his statutes and ordinances to their children. The same instruction, doubtless, is required now; passages in the New Testament, too numerous to be now quoted, prove this. And this method of putting a people in possession of his revealed truth would have been most efficacious, had it but been properly observed. If all heads of families prayed for the gift of holy and successful teaching,—a prayer which God would no doubt answer,—and used those numerous catechisms which have been drawn up with so much care and attention, God would bless the means which himself has appointed, and knowledge would be increased.—Had this plan been fully adopted, for instance, in our own country, and employed in connection with the ministry of the word, there can be no doubt but that by this time, it would have been fully enlightened; then should we see less necessity—if necessity at all—for such institutions as that to which our attention is at present directed.

With respect to Sunday schools, I may now observe that they are,

when properly conducted, quite in agreement with those means by which God puts a nation in possession of his revealed truth. There are numerous parents incapable of teaching their children in Divine things. There may be in every nation, there may be in this, a greater number of destitute persons than there was in the land of Judea. Business, likewise, is become more varied, so that the poor are much more occupied, and parents, in a variety of instances, much more separated from their children, than they were in the course of the agricultural life established among the Jews. I love to consider a Sunday school as presenting a view of that interesting scene which the tents of the Israelites displayed when the truth of God was presented to their inmates. The teachers in these institutions are, in an important sense, the deputed parents of the children whom their Christian kindness has adopted. We value these institutions as presenting to us great facilities for spreading the truth of God through the land. By means of them very many children are brought under instruction, whether their parents will hear or forbear. And we may expect that the children, thus early instructed in the statutes and judgments of God, will, when themselves become heads of families, teach them diligently to their children, and this sacred knowledge be both diffused through the whole breadth of the country, and transmitted from generation to generation.

Such, then, are some of the means employed to put a nation in possession (to refer to the words of our text) of the highest wisdom, the knowledge of the revealed truth of God.

II. I have now to remark, in the second place, that from this diffusion of the revealed truth of God, certain practical results may be expected; results which can alone carry a people to that condition in which it can be truly said of them, "This great nation is a wise and understanding people."

1. You will all allow, that in proportion as a nation is made righteous, in that proportion it becomes wise and great.

I conceive, therefore, that the first great effect of the diffusion of God's truth through the country will be the extensive conversion of men, in the best, the most Scriptural sense of the word; their conversion from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. It is evident that almighty God has connected moral influence with moral truth. In proportion as his truth is more clearly known, moral influence will be more powerfully felt. He has connected the gift of his Spirit, the great agent in operating on the minds of men, with his own word and truth. The word goes forth as the light; the accompanying Spirit is the heat, the vivifying principle. The light, merely as such, saves not; and yet it is, ordinarily, only in connection with the light, that the saving power is sent forth. And therefore it is necessary that, both in families and in schools, there should be a full communication of all the truth of God, not of a portion of it; inasmuch as in proportion to the clearness and extent of the manifestations of the truth will be its moral power on the conscience. The circulation, indeed, of truth, and of the whole truth, does not necessarily imply conversion. Men may still love darkness rather than light. But as conversion ordinarily implies the manifestation of the truth, so we know that there is never a clear, extensive declaration of the truth of God in a country, but conversions are found to be numerous. There is some-

thing in the Gospel so adapted to man in his present state, so much of moral fitness about it, that it never can be faithfully preached without some effect. And then there is the accompanying blessing, when the word comes not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost. Let us keep this important subject full in our view. Let us not forget that the great purpose for which the truth of God is to be disseminated is the conversion of men. You would think it strange if Christian ministers felt no concern on this subject. You would think them destitute of the spirit of their work if they were careless whether the truths preached by them led to the saving knowledge of God, or not. I do think that this same anxiety to see the end of the manifestation of truth accomplished ought to be felt by every person charged in any way at all with its dissemination. This should be the great object of parents in instructing their children; this the great object of teachers in Sunday schools. Take care that you sow the right seed. Give all that is peculiar to the Gospel. Teach the method of human salvation, and the necessity of conversion. It is not enough that you teach morals, though that is important. Introduce into your teaching the great principles of evangelical truth. God only promises his blessing to the whole Gospel. When you undertake to instruct an ignorant person, you then put yourselves under the obligation to teach him the truth by which he may be saved. Now, when all the truth of God is thus clearly and faithfully declared, we may expect the blessing of almighty God to accompany it, and therefore that conversions will be numerous. And this is one of the results which will contribute to make a great, a wise, and an understanding people.

2. We may calculate with certainty on another effect. Whenever the truth of God is extensively diffused through a nation, its morality will be improved.

There is something in sin which will not bear the light. No man less wicked than Satan can sin without feeling ashamed of it. If he can, there is a dreadful approximation to the abstract evil of diabolical spirits. But as long as God continues any gracious principle in the heart, there is a sense of the evil of sin. We may make an important use of this. We often talk of the necessity of raising the standard of morality in the country. The true standard of morality is the word of God, and to raise the moral opinions and feelings of the people to their just elevation, we must make them more intimately acquainted with the word of God, the highest and purest moral standard we can possess. What is this book but a transcript of the Divine mind? What does it express but God's hatred to sin? Just in proportion as we see the truths which God has revealed to us, do we see his own views of sin; and when these are generally spread through society, every action, being judged by this standard, is seen in its true character. And thus, where there is most light, there will be most shame. The force of sin now is met by a counteracting influence; the temptation to its commission is lessened, and the whole quantity of moral principle and feeling is proportionally increased. Let this give vigour to all our exertions. "Where there is shame," says our great moralist, "there may in time be virtue." In proportion as we can bring men to look at sin as it really is, in the same proportion are we taking steps to preserve them from the commission of it.

3. A nation will be thus made wise and understanding, because it will be preserved from dangerous errors, and especially from wasting infidelity.

Fashion has not merely respect to dress; there is a fashion in opinion too. The opinions of men strangely seem to run in a current; but these currents, at different periods, take different directions. Among the Jews there was, at some periods, a strong tendency to idolatry; and God's statutes and judgments were made known to preserve them from it. Sometimes we discern a tendency to a childish, but bigoted superstition; but in the present day it is to bold and fearless discussion. Persons of all ranks and characters now engage themselves in discussing subjects of which every man thinks himself a master. There is great danger of infidelity arising from this. Discussion may invigorate the mind, but it may likewise generate the pride which renounces all dependence on Divine instruction. Now, there is no preservation against this destructive vice so powerful as the general spread of the truth of God, by the means already pointed out. It is a singular fact, that wherever the book of God is least known there is the most infidelity. The most acute infidel that ever wrote against Christianity confessed that he had never read the New Testament through. When measures were adopted by a band of infidels to spread their own principles throughout Europe, in what countries had they the greatest success? Where the Bible was kept from the people; in France, especially,—where they were predisposed, by their national habits, to receive any kind of fashion if communicated by wit and ridicule,—infidelity spread extensively. Attempts were made in our own country; infidel books were widely circulated. If we have been, in great measure, preserved from this pestilent fashion, it is because the truth of God has been more generally known, and that because it has been more faithfully preached and taught, not only in our pulpits, but in our schools and families. I know that infidelity had some success; but it was chiefly among those who had never had the advantage of Christian education. Nothing will preserve a man from error but knowing the whole truth of God at first. The diffusion of secular knowledge, unconnected with the knowledge of Divine things, will prove rather a bane than a blessing. To refer again to France: they are not an ignorant people. Before the revolution twenty thousand persons were employed in writing books. But all their education, all their mental cultivation, has not prevented their general demoralization. If we would arrest the progress of bad principles, yes, and of bad practices, too, we must take our weapons from the Divine treasury; we must clothe our youth with the whole armour of God, and place before them the adamant shield of the sacred word. And do not forget, that the man who becomes an infidel, not only becomes pernicious to society, but places himself in those dreadful circumstances mentioned by St. Paul to the Hebrews. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" to him, "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." There is no sacrifice for sin but that of Christ; and as that is renounced, all the efficacy of truth on the heart and life is taken away, and the man is left under the bondage of sin; such persons are led blindfold by the father of lies through the labyrinths of error, and sin, and misery, till

they die in the dark, and perish for ever. So dreadful are the effects of infidelity, that a man would be well repaid for traversing all the countries and continents in the world, if he rescued one soul from its perilous thralldom.

4. Another great effect of the general diffusion of the truth of God, is the establishment of civil order and peace.

A blessing, this, of no trifling magnitude; one which we all ought to value, and which we should labour to promote with all holy boldness and zeal. We ought, as Christians, to set ourselves firmly against all those who would disturb the peace of society, dig up its very foundations, and involve us in the miseries of anarchy and ruin. I know there have been persons who have attached very dangerous consequences to Sunday schools, and especially to the Sunday schools of the Methodists, as though they led to the demoralization, and thus to the subversion of society. I need not now combat this delusion; I only ask, "If Bibles and schools lay the foundation of such evils, how comes it to pass that all the distinguished leaders in the cause of sedition and anarchy are themselves infidels, and therefore opposed to the Bible and Christian Sunday schools? How comes it to pass that such persons are industriously circulating publications full of the poison of infidelity, and that they thus seek to accomplish their evil designs? How is it that there is scarcely a man who, to high rank and political influence, adds a regard to the word of God, but is made the object of the most inveterate attacks?" It is thus that we would meet those who fear the results of the establishment of Sunday schools, and the circulation of the Bible. If, indeed, there were any thing in the truth of God unholy and evil in its tendency, then should we be encouraging evil by its circulation; but if this blessed book be an enemy to all sin, if its teachings are "the doctrine which is according to godliness," then, in proportion as I assist in its circulation, am I correcting and lessening the evils of society. And I may add here, that when a nation is thus made wise and understanding, they are taught the best, that is, the safest and surest methods of reforming whatever may need reformation in their respective governments. A sober, but, at the same time, just and enlightened public opinion, an opinion expressing the holy truth on which it rests, must exercise an influence on the whole government equally powerful and salutary.

5. And lastly,—for I have not time to say all even that I intended to say on this extensive subject,—I observe, that the greatest happiness will result from this general diffusion of the revealed truth of God.

Could we remove from this great metropolis all those evils which are the direct consequences of sin, evils which God never inflicted, evils which man—stirred up by Satan to be his own tormentor—inflicts upon himself, a change would be wrought in society of which we can scarcely form any conception. Take from mankind the darkness and oppression of vice, and the world would be but a few degrees below a state of paradise. Every person who is engaged in diffusing the truth of God is engaged in diffusing direct happiness. What happy changes often occur among the poor, for instance, through the preaching of the Gospel! Who can tell the blessedness of the change when the idle become industrious, and the intemperate sober; and when young men

are kept from the strange woman whose house inclineth unto death, and are preserved in the blushing purity of innocence? Where the sanctifying principles of Divine truth are introduced, no tongue can tell how engaging is the hallowed scene. In proportion, we repeat, as truth is spread, and its influence is felt, our national miseries are removed, and we become not only a wise, but a happy people; we become great, especially in the true sense of the word, as here used by the inspired writer: "What nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous?" "What nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" When the truth of God, with its accompanying influence and resulting fruits, spreads through a country, God is nigh to that people; nigh to them in his word and ordinances; nigh to them by his hallowing Spirit; nigh to them by his directing and preserving providence; nigh to them to hear their prayers; nigh to them in all things that they call upon him for. The Christian dispensation, indeed, is founded, not on temporal, but on spiritual promises; but nations, as collective bodies, must have their rewards and punishments in this present world, for, as collective bodies, they do not exist in another. The nation that will not serve him shall nevertheless know that he is a God that judgeth in the earth; while the nation that is great, and wise, and understanding, by the diffusion and influence of Divine truth, shall find him to be a wall of fire round about, and a glory in the midst of them.

In this great work, I trust, you are labouring. Be steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in it, as the work of God. Your labour is not in vain. Persevere in it with singleness of heart; and commend all your efforts to the Divine blessing, without which no labour can succeed.

SERMON CXXII.—*The First Sabbath in the New Year.*

"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness," Psalm lxxv, 11.

THE voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous, and if our domestic retirement be thus suitably employed in these hallowed exercises, much more ought we to declare His praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion, and in the great congregation to sing of Him who is the author of all our blessings.

This heavenly employment forms at all times a part of the public services of the Church of Christ. Praise waiteth for God in Zion. Every other exercise connects itself with this. Praise ought to ascend along with the sighs of penitence, and to be mingled with the fervour of our prayers; for, whatever our wants may be, great are the blessings which we have already received, and the very depth of our humiliation proclaims the height of the Divine mercy.

But the present is a season specially adapted to this exercise. The first Sabbath of the new year shines upon us. We have more than completed the circle of the past year, and are now just entering upon another of those revolutions which are so rapidly measuring out our

earthly existence. We have remembered, I trust, the sins of the past year, and have humbled ourselves before God:* let us now review its mercies. The one has excited our penitence; the other may excite our gratitude, and prepare us to render to God more cheerfully the offering of ourselves in that solemn service which we are accustomed, at this season, annually to observe;† and thus may we feel ourselves bound to these vows, not only by the obligations of duty, but also by the affections of a thankful spirit.

Of the year that is past, then, we may say, “Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.” And in calling to mind the many instances of this which will rush on the memory of the attentive spirit, let us take a view sufficiently large and ample, that so, “in the multitude of our thoughts within us, his comforts may delight our souls;” and let us, though it be generally and rapidly, mark that goodness which has crowned the year,

I. As to our country.

II. As to our families.

III. As to our personal experience. And

IV. As to the universal Church.

I. As to our country.

I have no respect for that piety which insulates itself from the country which fosters it, or delights chiefly in dwelling upon dark and humiliating scenes, however real, in the spirit of impatience, and the bitterness of censure. I love, rather, the pious patriotism of the ancient Jews, whose hearts hovered over Zion, even in her desolations, and pronounced their blessing upon all the lovers of Jerusalem. Nor does justice, less than piety, demand this recognition of our national mercies, since there is not one of them which is not, in some of its results, a blessing to ourselves; like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even upon Aaron’s beard, and went down to the very skirts of his garments.

With a loftier, because a much more hallowed and grateful, feeling than that which led the ancient to sum up every thing in the declaration, “I am a Roman,” may any one of us say, “I am a Briton.” Ours is a country far from being generally grateful for its mercies. It is still chargeable with a mighty amount of guilt, and often stained with crimes which ought to cover us with mourning. But still it is a country to which God has given one of the mightiest empires ever swayed by man; and has so divided it into different parts of the earth as to connect it with his plans for the enlightening and salvation of the world;—a country where, amidst much of darkness, a brighter light of evangelical truth is shining; where, in the midst of awful vice, there is a higher degree of public and private virtue than in any other; a country whose civil and religious institutions are, at once, the light and the admiration of a great part of the world; and, to imitate which, many other nations are making sometimes even convulsive efforts. Justice, here, is a terror to evil doers; here equal law spreads its protection over the roof of the cottage, as well as over the prouder dome; here conscience is set free from fetters; the various associations of Christians keep their solemn assemblies; the Sabbaths of the land are marked

* At the watch-night.—EDRT. † The renewing of the covenant.—EDRT.

by worshipping multitudes, and cheered by the songs of praise; the Churches have rest, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, are multiplied.

My brethren, that such a state of things has been continued, by the good providence of God, through another year, is matter of devout thanksgiving; we have not deserved such mercy; and yet so it is. And to this we may add another year of peace, and a year, if not of great commercial prosperity, yet of general employment for the poor; a year, too, when, in the moment that the full-charged clouds of heaven threatened almost wholly to destroy the harvest, God was entreated for the land, and spared the remainder; a year in which we have had no epidemic diseases, as in some other countries, but in which the pestilence that walketh in darkness has been turned aside to waste and wither in less favoured lands. Let us gratefully sum up all these mercies, and say, as to our land, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness."

II. As to our families.

I love to mark the blessed effects of Christianity upon those smaller and interesting societies which we call families, connected by blood, and, as it were, identified in the same joys, and sorrows, and interests of life. Among the bright and peaceful creations of our religion, among its powerful and noiseless triumphs, on these the eye and the heart will often rest with almost unmingled satisfaction. When religious wisdom and character give influence to the head; when man is at once a king and a priest in his own household; when love is the bond of union, and the law of love the great rule of conduct; when natural instincts are sanctified and refined by Christian affection; when purity is the guardian of peace, and the infirmities of natural corruption are controlled in every bosom by the strength of rallying principle, and the returning flow of the tide of kindness; when God is acknowledged and honoured, the morning and evening sacrifice offered on the altar that sanctifieth the gift, and the daily repasts eaten with thankfulness, and sanctified by the word of God and prayer; when we see such a family, what see we but an inclosure that is as a field which the Lord hath blessed, and in which, therefore, some of the flowers and fruits of Eden are permitted to grow? Such was the family at Bethany which Jesus loved; and many such are found, I trust, among you.

It is seasonable for you, my friends, to remember your family mercies. I know that the year has been, as to some of you, marked by special afflictions, and I shall give a word to the afflicted by and by; but as to most of you, how exempt have you been from any but those ordinary cares and transient visitations to which all are subject! And ought not this to be remembered by you this day with the deepest gratitude? What has happened in many families might have taken place in yours. But you, fathers, are in life and health, the guides and protectors of your households; you, mothers, are spared to watch with a tender anxiety—which none but mothers can feel—over your rising charge; you, children, are not left orphans, but are still permitted to see before you the guides of your youth. No great change of circumstances has plunged you into difficulty or ruin; no stain has fallen on your good names; no outward pressure has produced among you long and distant separations into foreign lands and deadly climates. The

circle of your family hearth is unbroken, and all its members meet together this day in the house of your God to offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving; the language of your lips, (O may it be pronounced with all the emphasis of a deeply affected heart!) will be that of the text, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness."

III. The year has been crowned with the Divine goodness as to our own personal experience.

And here I lose sight of your preservations from bodily danger, and death; and of the health you have enjoyed, so as to have been able to attend with comfort to the allotted duties of life: subjects, these, not to be forgotten by you, and never to be remembered without grateful devotion. But I merge them now in the higher considerations suggested by the spiritual blessings which have been granted to you. And when we speak of spiritual blessings, let us not forget how strikingly they mark the Divine benevolence; how emphatically, under all the circumstances of our case, that may be called "goodness" which imparts them.

When considering spiritual blessings as the portion of any man, we cannot but mount up to that boundless, that mysterious goodness which humbled the eternal Word to humanity, and spared him not from the sorrows of the cross, in order, so to speak, to free itself from the restraints of Divine justice, that it might recover and bless mankind. Justice must be honoured; but let it be honoured upon Him, and at that price I will cause all my goodness to pass before the world, and will proclaim myself the Lord God, long suffering and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. What affecting instances of goodness spring from this! What patience under our oft-repeated provocations! What waiting for seasons of reflection to mix with our thoughts, and rightly to direct them! What arrangements of our circumstances, to subdue us by kindness, or to correct and move us by fear! What quickening influences have been imparted! What kind arousings from our sloth! What readiness to receive our prayers! What bounteousness in the supply of our wants! What balancing our strength with our trials! In a word, what a picture do the dealings of God with man present, of condescending, patient, anxious, watchful, and communicative goodness! And does not the past year present numerous—should I not rather say, innumerable—instances of this goodness as to ourselves?

I am addressing some who, during the past year, have been, for the first time, made, in truth, the subjects of the renewing grace of God; on you I call, this day, for special acknowledgment. From what a depth of misery and danger have you been plucked! You were as sheep going astray; but you are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. You have experienced the most extraordinary change of which the nature of man is capable; for you have passed from death unto life. At the commencement of the year you were in the world; at its close you were in the Church. You might have been, at this day, wandering in the way of error and wretchedness; your foot is now in the path of truth and peace. Your eye might still have fallen, in your more reflecting moments, upon the gloom of eternal darkness, the sad bound and limit of those intermediate engagements and pleasures which occupy the life of a worldly man; now

you hear the voice, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, which no man can shut." And although the contest is as yet only begun, yet it is said to you, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." I claim it for my Lord, that you forget not all his benefits; that you muse upon them till the fire kindles, and you feel how sweet and suitable are the words of one in the same circumstances: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry; he brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." That song of praise you ought ever to sing; but it can never sound with sweeter accents, never thrill with a fresher delight, than at this moment, while you reflect that thus has God crowned the year with his goodness.

I address others of you who have longer known this grace in truth, and to whom the experience of the past year has been comforting and advancing. And this you owe to the special goodness of God. Nothing which has marked your experience as religious has been the growth of your own nature, the produce of your own virtue, but has been opposed and contrary to it. How powerful a proof is this of the presence and working of a superior power in you! And that power is the Lord's alone. But if it be indeed so; if, independently of him, this state could not for a moment have been maintained, how affecting a proof of his goodness is thus furnished you! "Will God in very deed dwell with man?" Yet such is the fact. Your light is light from him; your strength, strength from him. You say with the apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am." You have been brought low, and he has helped you; you have been in danger and he has guarded you; you have been in the furnace, and why were you not harmed there, but because there was one with you whose form was like unto the Son of God? The wind has been boisterous; your very faith seemed failing through fear; and, like Peter, ready to sink, you cried, "Lord, save, or I perish;" and you have felt the same hand of preserving Omnipotence, and heard the same kind reproof for your want of confidence: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Brethren, I need only turn your thoughts to the past year, and its full-charged circle of mercies, new every morning, will revolve before you, and you will say, in the fulness of grateful recollection, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness."

But ah! in turning your attention to the spiritual blessings of this year, do I strike a chord in any heart which responds only in tones of mourning? Do I awaken in any heart the painful remembrance of religious barrenness and declension? Do I hear a sigh from one which, if rightly interpreted, says, "I have restrained prayer before God?" From another, "I have received the seed—the word—among thorns, and the thorns have sprung up, and the care of the world, or the deceitfulness of riches, has choked the good seed; and I have been unfruitful?" From a third, "I have grieved the Holy Spirit by trifling and neglect?" From a fourth, "I have been unfaithful to his covenant, and now appear before him guilty and miserable?" My brethren, I would not stifle these emotions; they befit you, they are salutary; the only hope for you is in deep humility and penitence. But there is at least

one view in which even you may adopt the language of the text, and say, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." You have been spared; God has not dealt with you according to your unfaithful dealings with him; the Intercessor has pleaded for you, and you see another year. Let this recollection of the goodness of God come to you, giving greater tenderness to your sorrows, strength to your desires, and new life to your hopes. Account the long suffering of God, as to yourselves, to be salvation. Had he intended to destroy you, he would not have shown you these things which now you see,—this day, this book of promise, this throne of grace, this Advocate with the Father, this merciful God, now bending down with ineffable compassion, and saying, "Return, ye backsliding children;" "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely." Upon this very day he is ready to show the crown of his goodness, by restoring to you the joy of his salvation. Respond to his merciful invitation, and say, "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God."

IV The year has been crowned with goodness as to the universal Church.

As true piety always connects us in spirit and sympathy with our country, so does it more especially identify us, so to speak, with the universal Church. The communion of saints is not confined to the narrow circle of our religious acquaintance; they who truly experience it, love all that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity; and their mind often hovers, in affectionate thought, even over those waste places of Sion which, alas! the visible Church still, in too many places, presents to our view, but which, we trust, shall all be repaired and restored.

The Church has a mighty mission to the world, a glorious destiny to accomplish. She has to be as the day-spring from on high, to visit them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace; she has to banish the grim forms of the idols of pagan superstition, and to unveil the God of truth before the nations; she has to abolish the rites of cruelty and death, and to turn the hope of man to the sacrifice whose great character is love; she has to erect pure altars, and to call man to them to worship the living God which made heaven and earth. Her task is to unchain the human intellect, to soften and subdue the savage, to fill the earth with arts and useful science, to comfort them that mourn, to banish vice, to teach men to live and to die, and, by leading them to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, to render them to God and heaven cleansed from every stain. If we are a part of this Church, how gladdened should be our hearts if she has been, through the grace of God, faithful to her high calling, and has prospered in her work! In former times she has been unfaithful; she once lay with scarcely any sign of life; and even now, in too many parts, this is still the case. In the room of light, we behold darkness; instead of a true worship, superstition; and instead of zeal, lukewarmness. But in these last days God has revived his work; and if we can look back upon the year, and see continued proofs of this gracious visitation, or any proof of special interposition, then may we, as to the Church at large, as well as with respect to ourselves, gratefully acknowledge, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness."

Thank God, the past year calls for this acknowledgment. Reli-

gious liberty has been more strongly guaranteed to our Protestant brethren in France. Advocates of the inspiration and supremacy of Scripture, and of the Godhead and atonement of Christ, have risen up with renewed activity among the fallen Churches of Germany. Great and special revivals of religion have taken place in America. The work of God is spreading even in heathen lands. And at home, our missionary, Bible, tract, and other similar societies, have not diminished in activity; while, amidst much abounding wickedness, faithful ministers and faithful people have increased. Nor ought we to overlook the liberation of Greece. Is not this a pledge of the final rescue of the Asiatic Churches from the yoke of Mohammedan imposture? All these are circumstances which call on us to say, as to the Church at large, that the past year has been crowned with the goodness of God.

I conclude this review of the mercies of the past year,

1. By addressing those to whom it has been a year of special affliction.

My dear friends, to you a dark line of trouble has run through the year, or through a large portion of it; and yet I call even upon you to join in this work of thanksgiving. You have had afflictions, but you have likewise had mercies. Nor has God visited you with all the suffering that you have deserved, and which, therefore, he might have inflicted. And what have been many of your troubles but blessings in disguise; which, now that you see their real character, you would not have been without? You have learned more of your own weakness, and more of the strength of God. You see more clearly the vanity of earthly things, and the value and desirableness of spiritual and eternal good. The chastening was not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, it has yielded to you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Think of these things, O thou afflicted and tossed with tempest; and while thou bowest meekly to the rod, hast thou no song of praise? Canst thou number no mercies among the events of the past year? O yes, a thousand now crowd in on thy recollection. Thank God, then, and take courage.

2. I beseech, you, brethren, by all these mercies, that you present yourselves a living sacrifice unto God.

You are his, and he deals very bountifully with you. Thankfully acknowledge that "He is thy praise, and he is thy God." Renounce every other authority, and submit to him. Gratitude is not found in sentiment only, but in practice too: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Say, then, "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar." "For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Every renewed mercy increases our obligations to love and serve him; and happy is that man, who, under the full power of joyous and grateful feeling, so surrenders himself to God, as to live for no other purpose than that of glorifying him.

SERMON CXXIII.—*The Love of Christ.*

“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,” Eph. iii, 19.

IF I needed proof that the Apostle Paul was uninfluenced by ambition, that mere party zeal was not the spring of his vast exertions, I could turn to no passage in his writings more decided than the paragraph out of which the text is taken. Great labours alone would not be sufficient to prove him free from this contamination; for the labours of others who have toiled for fame have been as excessive and continued; and for the same reason a willing exposure to hardship and danger would not, by itself, clear him from the charge. But when you enter into the feeling with which he habitually regarded his work; when you hear him pouring contempt on the mere form of even Christianity itself, and asserting that in Christ Jesus nothing will avail but a new creature; above all, when you see him pouring out his soul in ardent prayers, that they to whom he ministered might fail in nothing of the saving grace of God; then you manifestly see what was his great object; that it was no less than to raise the moral condition of men; to bring them, not to himself, but to Christ. In a word, his was the charity which labours and suffers to save souls from death, and to cover a multitude of sins.

See an illustration of this in the case before us. The Ephesian Church was in the highest degree attached to him. Had he wanted partisans, none could have been elsewhere more warm. Human ambition would here have rested satisfied; but not so the pure and ardent desires of the apostle. He had higher aims. The members of the Ephesian Church had been quickened from their death in trespasses and sins; they had been raised to a new and spiritual life, and made to sit as in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; yet this does but serve for that warmth of desire which he cherished, that the work of God might be perfected in them. He sees them as still below the standard; a grace as yet unattained; riches not yet supplied to them; a mighty power still unfelt. And for this cause, therefore, did he bow his knees in prayer, and seek that, according to the riches of the Divine glory, they might be filled with all the fulness of God. Mere human ambition would not have led to this. Prayer freezes on the lips of him whose heart tells him that he is about to ask only for the accomplishment of his own selfish objects. It can only flow freely and unchecked from him whose conscience bears him witness that he seeks truly and only the glory of God. To one portion of this sublime and wondrous prayer,—a prayer in which the apostle goes beyond the usual sweep even of his own vast conceptions,—I would direct your attention.—Justice to such thoughts and such language we cannot do; but they are written for our learning; and even imperfect illustrations of them may, by the blessing of God, fix some truth more deeply on our minds, and excite us to loftier aspirations after all that God has, by his Son, made possible to man.

The love of Christ, says the apostle, passeth knowledge; and yet is

to be known by us. These are the topics of the text ; and of them I propose to offer a few illustrations.

I. Of the love of Christ the apostle affirms, that it passeth knowledge.

1. He himself furnishes an illustrative instance when he says, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ;"—a merely just and righteous man would be admired ; but he would not so take hold of the heart of another as to produce a willingness to die for him ;—"yet peradventure," in some rare case, "for a good man," a man of benevolence, adorned with the softer virtues, and abounding in the distribution of his favours,—for such a one "some would even dare to die ;" some one, overcoming even the love of life in the fulness of his gratitude, might venture to give his own life to preserve that of such a one. But we were neither just nor good ; we were sinners ; and "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Christ died for us, not only when we were sinners, but as we were sinners. That could not have been anticipated ; and in this respect, therefore, the love of Christ passeth knowledge. For, take man, as it were, in the abstract ; view the nature of the race for which Christ died, impressed and characterized as it is by sin. What is it ? As to intellect, it is a nature which, in all matters of duty, hates truth, and loves error. As to will, it is rebellious and ungovernable, spurning the control of God himself. As to affections, loving that which ought to be its abhorrence, and hating whatever is morally lovely. As to temper, fierce, malignant, and cruel. As to truth, hollow and hypocritical. As to benevolence, selfish. And when you have thus reflected on the nature of man as a sinner, then think of his history, notwithstanding all the checks under which he has been placed ; and a milder picture cannot be drawn of man than we should thus obtain. Passes it not, then, all knowledge, all reasonable conception and probability, that this fallen nature should be so sympathized with ; that these flagrant rebellions should excite, not an inexorable anger, but pity and love ? And such love, that our Saviour, looking not so much on man as offending, but as his creature, and as his creature still capable of restoration, should melt in compassion, and die to effect his redemption ;—this is indeed love "that passeth knowledge."

2. The manner in which this love is manifested carries the principle beyond all conception and expression.

It was love to the death. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But when we speak of the death of Christ for us, how many wonderful and inconceivable circumstances does this imply !

It was death for sinners ; death in their stead ; death, that the penal claims of law, and that law the unchangeable, unrelaxable law of God, might be fully satisfied. The redemption price was fixed by a spotless justice ; and the love of Christ to the sinner was to be tested by the vastness of the claims to be made upon him.

The nature of the sinning race was to be assumed. The love of Christ disdained not this. He existed in the form of God, and yet condescended to appear in fashion as a man. Man was dishonoured, and his substitute could appear in no glory ; and therefore did Christ empty himself, making himself of no reputation, and submitting to be despised and rejected of men. When he prays to be received into

the glory which he had before the world was, we see both a pre-existent glory, and a future glory; but there is a break between them; and this interval of darkness extended through the whole life of Jesus. That was the duration of the grand, the total eclipse of the second Person in the Trinity; and O, how deep the obscurity, when compared with the ineffable splendour of the glory from which he came, and the glory into which he was received! Think of Christ as now glorified. Behold him as the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne. Hear the voice of the myriads of heaven: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And then behold him standing silent, and patient of insult, at the bar of a creature, and that creature a sinful man; behold him submitting to the lowest expressions of ignominy and contempt from other sinful men; and measure the depth of the love by the depth of the humiliation.

But the wages of sin is death; and his love shrank not from the full and awful satisfaction required. It was death in our stead. Then it must be attended with anxious forebodings. And he had them. He had a baptism to be baptized with: and how was he straitened till it was accomplished! How often did he advert to the coming hour! that hour that should derive its fearful emphasis from suffering unto death. It was death in our stead. Then it must be a felt, and not a merely apparent infliction. His trembling flesh declared that so it was. There was that which even he feared: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." These are awfully mysterious words. Who can fathom their depth of meaning? It was death in our stead. Then it could have no alleviating consolation. It must be deep, unmingled suffering. It was so to him. "My soul," said Christ, "is exceeding sorrowful." "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," said a very imperfect saint; "for thou art with me." But Christ died as the representative of sinners; and the words wrung from him were, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Of what mysteries have I suggested the recollection to you! Can you comprehend them? that feeling with which he spoke of the baptism of blood? that last mysterious agony? that complaint of being forsaken of God? You feel you cannot. They transcend all your thought; and the love which made him stoop to them is, therefore, love "which passeth knowledge."

3. The love of Christ passeth knowledge, if we consider it as illustrated by that care for us which signalizes his administration.

Care is the offspring of love; and now that he is exalted to his sacerdotal throne in heaven, and all power is given to him in heaven and earth, what cares for man does he there indulge and exercise! There is care for all men; that nice and accurate arrangement of their circumstances which shall concur with his designs to save them. There is joy to soften them, and sorrow to correct them; and there are the influences of his Spirit, adapted to their character and state; and there is his own pleading and powerful intercession, by which he interposes between the uplifted axe and the barren tree, and cries,

"Spare it yet another year also." There is care for his Church, in all her conflicts and dangers, so that to this hour all the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against her. And in this love for the Church, there is love for the world, which, by the hallowed agencies of the Church, is to be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and thus blessed and saved. And then there is that care for his saints, of which the apostle gives us so tender a description: "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are." Think of the number of the saints, and the number of their infirmities, and their constant recurrence; and how delightfully true it is, that they never fail to touch his heart, and that with a feeling so tender, so benevolent, so prompt to aid, and yet so wise and considerate, always guided by a perfect knowledge of the case. Think of all this care. But who can measure the love that produces it? Who feels not that this is love "which passeth knowledge?"

4. The subject is farther illustrated by the nature of the blessings which result to men from the love of Christ.

We usually estimate the strength of love by the blessings it conveys, or, at any rate, would convey. And if the benefits be beyond all estimate, neither can we measure the love. Apply this to the case before us. What is the value of the universal offer of grace and mercy? You could tell, if you could number, in those realms of light, the myriads who will finally be placed there as the fruits of it; but they are a multitude which no man can number, and their voices are as thunder, and as the commingled sound of the countless swellings of the waves of many waters. What is the value of pardon? You could answer, if you could find words in which to express "the joy of his salvation;" and could you take the gauge of hell's misery, its depth of despair, and that breadth and length of agony from which Divine forgiveness saves. What is the value of a regenerate mind? This, too, you could explain, if you could explain to others, in words, the fellowship with God to which it now raises you, and could you yourself conceive all the glory of that state for which it makes you meet. What is the value of victory over death? See it in the man whom death conquers, and before whose dying gaze the dark banner of his conqueror seems waving with malignant triumph, shuts out, at once, every scene of past enjoyment, and every prospect of future hope. See it in him in whom that holy victory is realized; whose faltering tongue can whisper, or whose speaking eye can convey the sentiment, when the tongue is no longer faithful to its office, "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." But though you may have seen sinners driven away in their wickedness, and saints sweetly fall asleep in Christ, you have not been able to measure the inward, the unrevealed, the unrevealable feeling of the one or the other. No, nor yet can we conceive what it is to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord, any more than of that fullness of joy which the saints shall possess, when the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall change their vile bodies, that they may be like his glorious body; the blessedness of the hour when they shall spring up immortal from their tomb, and say, while every limb is full of the energy of Him who is the resurrection and the life, "O grave, where

is thy victory?" Nor what is the joy of being presented to the Father, and of being with the whole company of heaven, for ever with the Lord. If these are the blessings which spring from the love of Christ, then does that love itself pass all knowledge.

5. Once more: the love of Christ passeth knowledge, because it is the love of an infinite nature.

Love rises with the other qualities and perfections of the being in whom it is found. Among animals, the social attachments are slight, and the instinctive affection dies away when its purposes are answered. In man, love rises with his intellect. In him, it is often only limited by his nature, and, when rightly directed, shall be eternal. Many that love on earth shall doubtless love for ever. In angels, benevolence is, in all probability, more expansive and generous than even in man. Their love has an affecting exposition in some parts of the word of God. There is joy among them over one sinner that repenteth. They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, Poor, and diseased, and neglected, as was Lazarus, yet did they bear his spirit to Abraham's bosom; and they shall gather the elect of God from the four winds of heaven. But the love of which the text speaks is the love of "God our Saviour." Happy is it for us, that we have this ground of confidence. The Divinity of Christ is no unimportant doctrine. It is vital to our faith and hope. Ask you the difference, as to the result of the teaching which recognizes, or which denies it? We answer, All the difference between the love of man, and the love of God. Were Christ merely a man, his love could not pass knowledge. What man has felt, man can conceive. Love can be measured by the nature which exercises it. But this love passeth all knowledge but that of the Divine nature, because itself is Divine. Christ is God; and he who would fully know his love must be able to span immensity, and to grasp the infinite himself. "The love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

II. But while it is true that the love of Christ passeth knowledge, it is equally true that it is to be known by us: "And to know the love of Christ."

To know the love of Christ is,

1. To recognize it, in its various forms and expressions, in our constant meditations.

And where shall we turn and not be met by this, to us, most important subject? Look we at nature? Philosophy may exclude him here, but we claim all for him. The whole fabric was built by the Son of God, and by him all things still subsist. That that sun is not darkened, that the moon is not turned into blood, is the fruit of his long-suffering. This was Peter's answer to the scoffers of his day; and still are we required to "account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." Do we regard our outward blessings? They are the fruits of the same love, and that love ought ever to be seen in them. Is it for sinful man to be so kindly dealt with, that his bread should be given, his water be sure? Have we respect to our inward religious impressions? Those reproofs, those quickenings, those secret calls, are the fruits of pleading love, of waiting mercy. What say they to thee, O careless soul, but that "the Master is come, and calleth for thee?" Look we upon our religious privileges? Herein,

too, is love; in this volume of direction and promise, in these holy ordinances, in the fellowship of saints. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound. Brethren, how deeply criminal to neglect to notice these manifestations of the kindness, and love toward man, of God our Saviour! How delightful an occupation, thus to track all the streams of mercy up to their Source! We are surrounded by the proofs of the love of Christ: let us see to it that the blinding veil be not on our heart; that our eyes be not holden that we should not know him. We are called to know the love of Christ: let us accustom ourselves to reflect upon it; to see it in its various forms and results; and then shall our meditation of him be sweet.

2. To know the love of Christ, is to perceive it in its adaptation to our own personal condition.

This is no picture of a love in which we are not interested, and which may therefore be regarded only as at a distance, and made a subject of speculation; a love which, however perfect and admirable, is completely insulated from ourselves, and which, though we may contemplate it, we are not called to apprehend. What am I? A sinner? He presents the merit of his expiation before God, and pleads for me. Am I diseased? He brings me health and cure. Weak? He is my righteousness and strength. Am I lost and undone? O daughter of Zion, thy King cometh unto thee, meek and lowly, but having salvation. To know the love of Christ, let me know myself; let me enter into the very depth of the case. Am I groaning in my prison for debt? Jesus, my Friend and Surety, brings the price of my release. Am I sentenced to die? He has procured my pardon. Am I poor, and stripped of my title to the heavenly inheritance? He, my Kinsman and Redeemer, has brought it back into the human family, and presents me with all I had forfeited. When I thus feel my state, I not only read of his love in the descriptions of it with which I am furnished, but it comes home to my own heart, and I now begin to know that love of Christ with which he hath loved me.

3. To know the love of Christ is to experience it in its practical results.

I will not distract your minds with many particulars. Take one instance. He offers you pardon, and the offer is a proof and manifestation of his love; but properly to know it, pardon itself must be accepted and embraced. Brethren, how vain is every thing beside! How vain every approach to it, if we allow ourselves to rest without it! Tell me not that you have admired the wondrous philanthropy of Christ.—You may have done so as a mere sentimentalist. Tell me not that you have embraced the doctrine of the cross, and have admitted the truth of his atonement. You may have done this as a mere doctrinalist. You may show me your system, with its chapters, and sections, with its complete logical arrangement, and with all the defensive arguments yourself or others may have devised. You may be convinced by them; you may admire; but are you pardoned? Have you felt the power of “the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God?” Has it been applied to your conscience, purging it from dead works, that you may serve the living God? Have you filial confidence, filial love? and is that Spirit in your heart which utters the all-inspiring accents, “Abba, Father?” This is to know his

love. Seek it, and you must find it. Rest without it, and you are but "as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal."

4. Finally, to know the love of Christ, we must put forth those efforts through which that love is appointed to express itself in our daily experience.

In him that love exists as an inexhaustible fountain. In the words immediately following the text it is called "the fulness of God." But we, too, are called to bow our knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and seek, by believing prayer, to be ourselves filled with all this fulness; and thus shall the stream be directed to our own souls, and flow on without obstruction. O wondrous plan of mercy, by which, on terms so easy, and in their exercise so hallowing, our weak and wanting condition obtains access to the fulness of God! It is thus that his power shall subdue the dominion of sin, and we shall walk in all the liberty of true holiness. It is thus that healing virtue shall flow at the touch of the finger of faith, and hallow, and keep hallowed, a polluted nature. It is thus that our wandering mind is restrained into recollection, and watchfulness, and that habitual waiting upon God by which it is kept in perfect peace. It is thus that God is found as a present help in every time of trouble. The soul flees at once to her only refuge; and blessedly experiences that where the love of Christ is honoured by a full and instant trust, he fails not to stretch out the arm of his power, and continually to grant help and defence. And thus it is that we shall know with what love Christ reigns over ourselves, and, for us, that he reigns over the world, over Satan, over death. When our whole life is thus a life of faith in the Son of God, he shall dwell continually in our hearts, rooting and grounding us in love, and strengthening us with spiritual might according to the riches of his Divine glory. And if any of you should think that I have held up as possible attainments, blessings far too rich and elevated; desirable, indeed, but unattainable, I send you home to your closets to meditate on this whole prayer of the apostle, and thus to ascertain—though, even there, your most exalted conceptions will fall below the glorious reality—what the *possible* of Christianity is. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

With two remarks I dismiss you.

1. Remember that the rejection of love, especially of redeeming love, involves the deepest guilt.

You reject the authority of God, and that is sin. You refuse to conform to the holiness of God, and to be guided by his wisdom, and that is sin. But see the love of Christ; the love which passeth knowledge; the love which stooped down to your misery to raise you to the height of his own blessedness. If you reject that love, where can you flee for safety? How shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation? You may now look up to him, and behold his countenance

of mercy, and hear him say to you, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." But if you count all this love unworthy your regard, if you spend your life in real forgetfulness of it, the day comes when to the very rocks and mountains you shall say, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

2. Finally, remember that the grace is common to you all.

Yes; you who have made light of it hitherto may come and partake of its blessings. To this we invite you. Mourn before God that you have slighted the provisions of the love which passeth knowledge; but let the time past suffice, and now "come, for all things are ready." And you who know the love of Christ, put in your humble claim. You feel how unworthy you are; but ask in the name of Christ; "ask, and ye shall receive, and your joy shall be full." Continue receiving out of his fulness, and "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," shall present an object of admiring contemplation, a theme of rapturous acknowledgment and praise for ever and ever.

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END OF VOL. II.